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THE SPECIAL COLLECTIONS AT THE HAMBURG STATE AND UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

Abstract

Hamburg State and University Library Carl von Ossietzky, in its role as the regional library of the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg, collects, stores and presents all kinds of material relating to the history and regional studies of the city and its surroundings. The library collects literature about Hamburg and its prominent people as comprehensively as possible, and has been following this tradition since its foundation as a council library and academic city library back in the 15th century.

The special collections document the 500 year old history of the library. The collection was built up through donations from citizens and scholars, acquisitions from church libraries of Hamburg and deliveries of deposit copies from Hamburg publishers since 1696. The rare treasures form the library's individual profile. Having suffered large losses during World War II the library was rebuilt in the last century. There are six main collections: manuscripts (with over 8.400 occidental and 1.000 oriental manuscripts), over 400 literary and artistic remains, over 68.000 autographs, rare and old prints (over 260.000 old books, 5.000 artist books, 17.000 graphic prints), music materials (28.000 music prints, 3.000 music manuscripts), and over 60.000 maps. Today, the rare materials of the special collections are attractive sources for science and research.

In recent years, digitization efforts in Germany have contributed to the worldwide visibility of special collections. The number of digital objects is growing daily in the digital collections. This paper will focus on showing possibilities of developing access to the rare materials of the Hamburg library through indexing and digitization, and it will explain the importance of this kind of access for collaborative teaching and exhibition projects.

Keywords: digitization, special collections, open data, open access, participation

INTRODUCTION

Hamburg State and University Library Carl von Ossietzky is the largest academic library in Hamburg with more than 5 million media.¹ It serves as the central lending library for the University of Hamburg and the city's other institutions of higher learning, however, it is also a general academic library for the citizens of Hamburg and the metropolitan region. In its role as a regional library, the library collects, stores and presents all kinds of material relating to the history and regional studies of Hamburg and its surroundings. It collects literature about Hamburg and its prominent people as comprehensively as possible, and has been following this tradition since its foundation as a council library and academic city library back in the 15th century, in 1479.

Thus our library is the oldest academic institution in Hamburg still in existence. Right from the beginning, the library shared its rooms with Hamburg's most important educational institutions, the Latin school "Johanneum", founded in 1529 and also still in existence, and the academic high school "Akademisches Gymnasium", founded in 1618. (Illustration 1)

Over the years, the library became one of the biggest and most important public book collections in Germany. The constantly growing collection required more and more room, so during the centuries both the school and the library had to move several times into new buildings. At last, when the collection had grown to more than 120.000 volumes, they moved into a new building at Speersort in the city centre in 1840. (Illustration 2)

It is only since 1919, when Hamburg University was founded, that the library also functions as State and University Library.

Hamburg was heavily affected by allied bombing during WW II. The library was almost completely destroyed in 1943 – approximately 700.000 of the 850.000 volumes the library had collected so far were lost.

But already in 1945 the library started all over again in its 'new building', the former high school Wilhelm-Gymnasium, today it is our "Altbau" (old building) with a wonderful atrium. (Illustration 3) Today this historical part of the library building is used for many events like conferences, readings, concerts, theater performances, fashion shows and so on.

That is to say, the library also functions as a cultural center and engages in maintaining and presenting the cultural heritage and history of Hamburg. This engagement has its roots in the special collections.

1 About the holdings, numbers and facts about the Hamburg State and University Library see *Jahresbericht 2016*, 2.

SPECIAL COLLECTIONS OVERVIEW

The special collections document the 500 years old history of the library. The collection was built up through donations from citizens and scholars, acquisitions from church libraries of Hamburg and deliveries of deposit copies from Hamburg publishers since 1696. The rare treasures form the library's individual profile.

Robert Münzel, director of Hamburg Public Library (our name before the founding of Hamburg University), said in 1912: "Daß wir reich an einzelnen Seltenheiten sind, versteht sich bei einer Bibliothek, die zu den ältesten in ganz Deutschland gehört, fast von selbst."² ("It goes without saying that our library which is one of the oldest in Germany is rich in unique rarities.") Of course, he couldn't have known that thirty years later most of these rarities would be lost forever.

But thanks to many private gifts and donations, thanks to the financial support of the German Research Foundation (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft – DFG) and the Volkswagen foundation (VW-Stiftung – VWS) and thanks to new acquisitions stocks were increased. In the 1990s a great part of the manuscript collection, lost as booty and missing since World War II, returned to the library. Today our special collections comprise six main collections: manuscripts, bequests and autographs, rare and old prints, theater materials, music manuscripts and prints and map collection:

- 10.000 manuscripts with over 8.400 occidental and 1.000 oriental manuscripts,
- 400 literary and artistic bequests/remains and 68.000 autographs,
- 260.000 rare and old prints before 1900, 5.000 bibliophilic and artist books, 17.000 graphic prints,
- 3.450 handwritten inspection and prompt books, 74.000 playbills, photo archives with 400.000 negatives,
- 28.000 music prints, 3.000 music manuscripts,
- and 60.000 old and new maps and townscapes.³ (Illustration 4)

Of course, the rare materials of the special collections are attractive sources for scholarship and research if they are discoverable. "Beyond making information accessible and searchable, I think the next problem is discovery", said Orian Breaux, creator of the OldNYC App – a self-guided historic tour through New York using old photographs.⁴ Even though a large part of the manuscript collection has been published in printed catalogues, many of our unique rarities are unknown or would be forgotten because they aren't discoverable. As you know: If it isn't online, it doesn't exist.

2 See the Archive of the Hamburg State and University Library.

3 See <http://www.sub.uni-hamburg.de/sammlungen.html> [10. 12. 2017].

4 "The OLDNYC APP is here!"

DIGITAL CONTENTS AND COLLECTIONS

For more than 10 years the library has digitized its copyright-free historical holdings and made the data accessible to the public. By now the library has an experienced team and built up a solid infrastructure, using the open source software Kitodo for workflow and presentation and taking part in its further development.

All digital reproductions are available via the main library catalogues and the German Digital Library⁵:

- 1.500 historical manuscripts (i.e. 900 papyri, 533 Hebraica)
- 11.000 old books
- 1.900 graphic prints, especially portraits
- 4.000 periodicals
- Hamburg newspapers (1792–1945) via Europeana Newspapers project with more than 135.500 items
- 50.000 sheets of manuscripts of works, correspondence and personal documents from different literary remains
- 1.300 pictures of Hamburg Architecture of the 1920s
- 1300 musical works
- 450 old Hamburg views and maps (191 old maps in Europeana).

We started to digitize several finding aids like old handwritten and copyright-free printed catalogues of our holdings. Besides this we are transforming information from printed catalogues into our databases, for instance, about the 900 papyri which have been digitized in the last months and will soon be online via our local catalogue and the Papyrus Portal Leipzig.⁶

The Hamburg State Library digitized 533 manuscripts, especially from microfilms within the project “Digitization of medieval and early modern Hebrew manuscripts in the collections of German libraries” on the occasion of “50 years diplomatic relationship between Israel and Germany” which are integrated into the larger project “Hebrew Palaeography” of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities⁷ and into the website of the National Library of Israel.

This project is part of the initiative of the Governments of Israel and Germany to bring together the National Library of Israel (NLI) and German institutions, for instance the State Libraries of Berlin, Hamburg and Munich, under the leadership of the National Library of Germany.⁸ The aim is to preserve the rich body of Hebrew manuscripts produced by Germany’s Jewish communities and of other origins

5 <https://www.deutsche-digitale-bibliothek.de/> [10.12.2017].

6 See https://www.organapapyrologica.net/content/papportal_start.xed?XSL.PortalType.SESSION=papportal [10.12.2017].

7 See <https://www.academy.ac.il/> [10.12.2017].

8 See <http://www.dnb.de/EN/Wir/Projekte/Laufend/digitalisierungKulturerbe.html> [10.12.2017].

which were collected by German libraries, and make this invaluable material accessible to research and teaching.

Furthermore several exhibition and publication projects give the library an important impetus to push the online cataloguing and digitization of its rare materials. And I hope we can continue this process. We are delighted about these developments, especially with regard to university research. Two important institutions of Hamburg University have to be mentioned here: the Hamburg Center for the study of manuscript cultures⁹, which pays special attention to our oriental holdings, and the art history institute, who have started doing research on the largely unknown graphic materials of the library. The gradual exploration and description of hidden collections created an added value for the library.

During the teaching / exhibition and publication project "Manner, Myth and Moral - Dutch graphic prints in 1600 in Hamburg State and University Library" the most valuable and important part of this collection was edited and analyzed. By cataloguing and digitizing, 161 rare prints of high artistic quality are now available worldwide for scholars and art lovers. About 40 students worked with the original material, resulting in profound descriptions and interpretations of these important Mannerist prints. Moreover, quite a few rare or valuable prints were discovered. The accompanying publication "Manier, Mythos und Moral", edited by Imhof in 2014, underlines the high potential of such collections for research and teaching. (Illustration 5)

Further projects with the graphic collection and other image collections have been planned in close collaboration with the Institute of Art History at Hamburg University. Indexing and digitization are important and necessary preconditions for using this kind of special material in teaching and research projects.¹⁰

But its potential is far from being exploited to the full. On the IFLA Conference in Wrocław we discussed reciprocity: collections are dead without interaction, dialogue and use. The new technology and digital access have changed profoundly how users interact with the library and its resources.

Merete Sanderhoff from the collection and research department at the National Gallery of Denmark (SMK) in Copenhagen put it this way – and I fully agree: „The rise of digitisation and Internet access forces us to adapt to completely new user behaviours and expectations. This is hard work. There’s a lot of uncovered ground, and it requires experimentation and investment to succeed. But it’s necessary.“¹¹

9 <https://www.manuscript-cultures.uni-hamburg.de/> [10.12.2017].

10 For more information about projects with the graphic collection see the library blog: <https://blog.sub.uni-hamburg.de/?p=15008>; <https://blog.sub.uni-hamburg.de/?p=23567> [10. 12. 2017].

11 Sanderhoff, "Open Access. "

I'd like to draw the attention to the word "experimentation", since this is precisely where culture hackathons come in. Hackathons give the possibility for experimentation, for bringing special materials to the public and let the public participate.

Hackathon – "a portmanteau of the words 'hack' and 'marathon', where 'hack' is used in the sense of exploratory programming" – is a design sprint-like event in which computer programmers and others are involved to create usable software. For example, Facebook's 'Like button' was conceived as part of a hackathon.¹² But hackathons aren't just for coders: The culture hackathon Coding Da Vinci Nord, held in Hamburg from 17th to 18th September 2016, brought together over 100 participants: software developers, designers and scholars on the one hand, and specialists from 19 cultural institutions, especially museums, in Northern Germany, Denmark, and Sweden on the other.¹³ Eventually, 17 teams formed, out of them seven worked with the open data sets of engravings, maps and architectural photographs provided by our library.

Coding da Vinci Nord is a satellite of the national Germany-wide Coding da Vinci in Berlin which was initiated by the German Digital Library, the Service Digitization Berlin, the Open Knowledge Foundation Germany and Wikimedia Germany; it was held in 2014 and 2015 and is planned this year again.¹⁴ Hackathons typically last between a day and a week. Coding da Vinci Nord organizes a Kick-Off-Weekend with one day reserved for the presentations of the data by the participating institutions, brainstorming, teambuilding and first programming, and one day for pure programming and experiments before the sprint time starts. The sprint lasted 6 weeks in Hamburg (in Berlin, for instance, 10 weeks) and ended with an award ceremony on 6th November 2016.

One of the teams which worked with data sets from our library, the team "KollektOURmat" won the prize "most playful". Two designers, one cultural historian and an engineer created the prototype of the same name to explore the city of Hamburg on an interactive GPS-location based mobile tour.

They didn't know each other before the hackathon. Their team is a marvelous example how special collections on hackathons can create new friendships. It is fascinating to watch the passion of this and also the other teams in the interaction and work with our collections.

The "KollektOURmat" is a little box (formerly used for index cards), containing a small and mobile printer which prints out stickers with historical city views and old photographs from the Hamburg Museum of Art and Crafts and from our library to paste into a lovingly designed booklet.¹⁵

12 "Hackathon".

13 See <https://codingdavinci.de/news/2017/03/10/coding-da-vinci-nord-ein-nachhaltiger-erfolg.html> [10.12.2017].

14 See <https://codingdavinci.de/> [10.12.2017].

15 See <http://www.kollektourmat.de/> [10.12.2017].

Other projects used maps, photographs and engravings for architectural city tours, games, films, and digital annotation tools.¹⁶

EXPERIENCES

Cultural hackathons are a wonderful occasion for institutions to make their digital collections usable, to open these for the public, for cultural tourism, for use in educational resources, but also to market themselves, to influence the sustainable development of digital tools and new ideas/business ideas which enrich our society culturally. Thus the digitisation of public collections and the provision of detailed metadata support the sustainable development of digital culture in our society.

We as a cultural institution have impact:

- to open the mind for cultural heritage and its value,
- to sensitize the public for cultural identity,
- to open and share our materials as sources of inspiration for innovative ideas/business ideas.

The interaction with our materials and open data create new contacts and friendships as we saw before in the example of the Kollektourmat. Very important is that we can encourage young people to discover culture and share their experiences peer to peer. There are also examples for this. And at least the library is perceived as an open, usable and useful house for everyone.

A further good experience was the close cooperation with Wikimedia: Uploads of more than 1.000 architectural pictures of the Dransfeld photo archive from the 1920s by Wikipedians in WikiCommons, participation in initiatives like “#1Lib1Ref”¹⁷ and a “WikilibraryBarcamp”¹⁸ in Dresden, planning of an OpenGLAM-Tour at the Library are the benefits of this experimentation.

Another very good experience from this Hackathon was the feedback. One of the participants, Boris Crismancich, specialist for Internet of Services, and mentor of “Jugend hackt” (“youth hacks”), creates a catalogue of requirements for data provider and said: “Open Data are the most promising and innovative form of using cultural data”. He hopes that more cultural institutions will go this way.¹⁹

Let us remember the common saying: if it isn’t online, it does not exist. Furthermore, we can say: If it isn’t open for free use, it won’t be (re-)used, and if it isn’t used, it simply remains (unseen) potential and thus it doesn’t really exist. To

16 For more information see the library blog: <https://blog.sub.uni-hamburg.de/?p=21466> [10.12.2017].

17 See https://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/The_Wikipedia_Library/1Lib1Ref [10.12.2017].

18 See https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:WikiLibrary_Barcamp_2016 [10.12.2017].

19 Crismancich, “Museumsdaten.”

push the visibility and discovery of our special materials we use very intensely the Social Media like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. A few months ago we started the series “#oldhamburgstabi”: each Tuesday we show old photographs, views and maps of Hamburg on Instagram and Twitter.

CONCLUSION

The debate on open science, library openness, open access and open data has left traces. At the beginning of 2017 a working group was dedicated to check whether copyright-free holdings of the library could be open under Public Domain. Furthermore the working group should check the licences for out-of-print-works, digital publications and pictures made by staff members. The group has identified 15 types of material which have to get a licence. For copyright-free works the group recommends CC Public Domain Mark. Metadata will get a CC0 licence.

These steps would create optimum conditions for an Open-Digitization-Policy of the library, one of the recommendations of the Open Library Badge²⁰ which the library could get in March 2017.

Of course, there are many problems and it is hard work to push the outreach of these treasures, but it is necessary:

- limited resources,
- large number of hidden collections,
- new challenges in cataloguing and digitization,
- technological landscape for different materials and different users,
- marketing and fundraising,
- etc.

Cultural hackathons, initiatives by Wikimedia, portals like German Digital Library or Europeana are important partners for promoting a better visibility and easier discoverability of the special collections of cultural institutions. And they have in common that they work with open data, support the participation and the sharing of knowledge (citizen science).

In this spirit the cultural institutions, museums, archives, and libraries, should follow the mission of the Europeana: “We transform the world with culture! We want to build on Europe’s rich heritage and make it easier for people to use, whether for work, for learning or just for fun.”²¹

20 See <http://badge.openbiblio.eu/> [10.12.2017].

21 See <http://www.europeana.eu/portal/en> [10.12.2017].

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*Jahresbericht 2016: Jahresbericht der Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Hamburg Carl von Ossietzky.*²² Hamburg: Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Hamburg Carl von Ossietzky, 2017.

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Illustrations



Hamburg Public Library, 1745

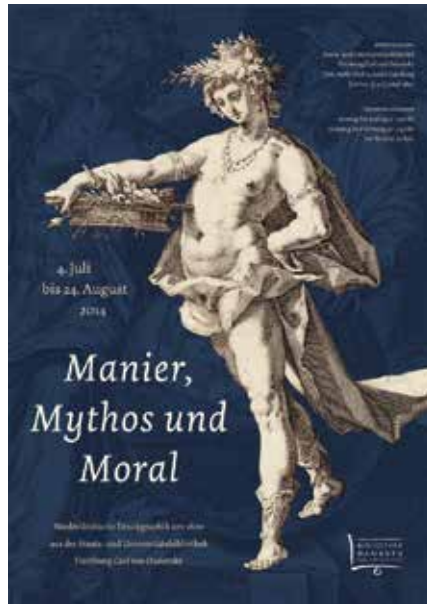
²² http://www.sub.uni-hamburg.de/fileadmin/redaktion/Bibliotheken_2016/StabiJahresbericht2016Web.pdf [10.12.2017].



Look at the library's Main Hall, 1905



Hamburg State and University Library: Cod. in scriin. 93, Hamburg Gospel Book, 11th century (ivory relief, 5th century)



Poster of the exhibition “Manner, Myth and Moral”, 2014

