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# Noticeboard

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## Institutes

### *The Library for Contemporary History, Stuttgart*

*History* The *Bibliothek für Zeitgeschichte* (Library of Contemporary History) owes its existence to the First World War. Founded as a private collection in Berlin in 1915 by the Swabian industrialist Richard Franck, the *Weltkriegsbücherei* (World War Library), as it was called until 1948, was initially just one of many wartime collections which were set up at this time in nearly all the countries involved in the war. The wide-ranging business connections of the coffee manufacturers Heinrich Franck and Sons, extending throughout the whole of Europe and into the USA, enabled Richard Franck to collect a large amount of material. By 1920 Richard Franck's collection comprised 45,000 books and pamphlets together with posters, leaflets, photographs, maps, ration cards, emergency money, letters and diaries, etc. The newspaper collection of the World War Library was also noteworthy; including copies collected abroad, it amounted to 2100 newspapers and periodicals of the war years.

Due to the housing shortage in Berlin after the war, Richard Franck was compelled to look for new premises for his rapidly growing collection. The former stately home Schloß Rosenstein was provided by the Württemberg State government, and the *Weltkriegsbücherei* opened there in 1921. During the years of economic depression, its private means permitted it to continue to buy foreign literature and make it accessible, often through the inter-library loan system.

In 1928 Richard Franck secured the future of the library by setting up a foundation with generous capital provision. Plans to set up a museum as well as a library had existed right from the start. The war museum was finally opened on 13 May 1933. One purpose of the museum was to legitimise a possible future war, in accordance with the ideology of the National Socialist Government. From then on the *Weltkriegsbücherei* was divided into four sections: library, archive, museum and research institute. By 1939 library stocks had increased to over 100,000 volumes. The *Weltkriegsbücherei* had become the most comprehensive library in Germany to specialise in all areas of military and political history of the twentieth century. As a scholarly institution the *Weltkriegsbücherei* was able to retain its independence during the National Socialist period. This was mainly due to the skilful negotiations of Wilhelm Heinrich Franck, who had become curator of the foundation after the death of Richard Franck in 1931. However, the library's directorship proved willing to make concessions in some areas which were by no means enforced by pressure from outside.

Although the Second World War provided the library collection with a wealth of documentary material, not least as a result of an arrangement with the army's propaganda units, it also caused the temporary end of the World War Library. In 1944 Schloß Rosenstein

was almost totally destroyed in an air-raid. About 75 per cent of the library holdings, which had been stored in a salt mine during the war, were confiscated in 1945 by the US occupying forces and a number of books and other materials were taken to the USA. Thanks to the combined efforts of Wilhelm Heinrich Franck and the director of the Württemberg State Library, Professor Wilhelm Hoffmann, a basis was found on which to rebuild the library. The former *Weltkriegsbücherei*, renamed *Bibliothek für Zeitgeschichte* (Library of Contemporary History) in 1948, was given offices and stack rooms in the *Württembergische Landesbibliothek* although its premises had also been destroyed in the war and only provisionally rebuilt. In 1949 Wilhelm Hoffmann succeeded in getting the confiscated books returned from the USA. By 1951 it was possible, via the *Württembergische Landesbibliothek*, to make the library stocks widely accessible on the inter-library loan system. Since then the *Bibliothek für Zeitgeschichte* has served an important function within the inter-library loan system, providing material to readers throughout Germany and, with the lifting of restrictions after the war, also at an international level.

When the *Württembergische Landesbibliothek* moved into its new building in 1971 both institutions continued their close co-operation by sharing premises and systems of organisation. Recently, the *Bibliothek für Zeitgeschichte* has developed into a research centre of international repute, particularly under the directorship of Professor Jürgen Rohwer (1959–89). A contributory factor has been a series of historical congresses organised by the *Bibliothek für Zeitgeschichte* in co-operation with the *Historisches Institut* (History Department) of the university and with the City of Stuttgart. In addition the *Bibliothek für Zeitgeschichte* has organised several exhibitions together with the City of Stuttgart, including 'Stuttgart during the Second World War'. Since 1989 the Library has been under the directorship of Dr Gerhard Hirschfeld.

*Library* This special library of the history and politics of the twentieth century has been built up on a large collection of literature about both World Wars, with an emphasis on foreign affairs and conflicts. The *Bibliothek für Zeitgeschichte* aims at completing its collection of literature of these specific fields. The books are selected on an international level, the foreign proportion amounting to approximately 70 per cent. At present the stock consists of just under 300,000 volumes, with a yearly increase of approximately 6000 volumes.

*Archives* In the archives of the *Bibliothek für Zeitgeschichte* special collections of the years from 1871 to 1945 are available. The *photo archive* includes press and private photographs from World War I (about 30,000) and from World War II (about 20,000) as well as photographic material of war and merchant shipping of all naval powers, from 1850 to the present (about 600,000 photographs). There is an especially valuable collection originating from the entourage of the last Russian czar, illustrating life at court and social and military life in Russia before the revolution. The *poster collection* includes reproductions of pictorial and written materials since the time of Wilhelmine Germany, with an emphasis on political posters of World War I and the Weimar Republic. The *pamphlet collection* includes over 2000 pamphlets which were dropped from aeroplanes during both World Wars. Special attention is drawn to the large stock of pamphlets of all parties and many associations of the Weimar Republic. The *map collection* includes approximately 7000 topographic and military maps mainly from the period of the First World War and concentrates on the situation at the Western front line. The *collection of life documents* is an archive of memories, diaries and letters from combatants of both World Wars. In the 'Collection Sterz' alone more than 25,000 letters to and from the front during the Second World War have been compiled.

*Department for the Documentation of Unconventional Literature* It is the responsibility of this department to collect grey literature, i.e. printed and copied material which as a rule is not circulated through the usual channels of the literature market. This material must have been

published in the Federal Republic of Germany. The main emphasis of this collection is on political opinions of individual persons and groups in respect of international and national conflicts as well as international relations. The collection includes 10,000 *monographs*, over 3500 indexed *periodicals* and *newspapers*, approximately 24,000 *posters* and about 85,000 *pamphlets*.

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