

# Archival Review: Institute library and more: the Library of the Ruhr

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## History of the Ruhr Foundation and Library of the Ruhr

The Ruhr Foundation was established 25 years ago as a public-private partnership by bringing together three libraries and an archive. The foundation's purpose then, as well as now, is to document the history and present of the Ruhr region and to preserve and make its historical library holdings available to the public.



Not far from the Schauspielhaus Bochum, the House for the History of the Ruhr itself provides information about the history of the region: It is housed in the building of the former Berg publishing house. Stiftung Geschichte des Ruhrgebiets.



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The Library of the Ruhr (BdR: *Bibliothek des Ruhrgebiets*) is both a special academic and a public library which, together with the Institute for Social Movements (ISB: *Institut für soziale Bewegungen*) of the Ruhr University Bochum and the archive, is housed in the House of the History of the Ruhr (HGR: *Haus der Geschichte des Ruhrgebiets*) in Bochum.

It collects and indexes publications on the history and present of the Ruhr region and – for reasons of comparison – other (mining) industrial conurbations. In addition, the library is dedicated to the theory, sociology and history of social movements, primarily of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, from a global perspective.



Numerous destinations for interlibrary loans of the special library. Stiftung Geschichte des Ruhrgebiets, photo: Ulrike Moritz.

With a collection of almost 500,000 media units, the library is one of the larger academic special libraries in these fields of study. Nevertheless, it can't be reduced to a scientific library, but also has functions of a public library for the interested local and regional population. Consequently,

among the users there are not only students and academics, but also researchers of local history without any scientific institutional affiliation.

In addition to specialist research support, the library offers a wide range of services. Due to the history of its predecessor institutions, the BdR owns some very rare publications. The holdings are searchable worldwide in the international library catalogue WorldCat and can be borrowed within the framework of national and international interlibrary loans.<sup>1</sup> Finally, it is linked to research and teaching through the research institute as well as the activities of the archive and also offers training courses on information literacy, primarily for students of history.

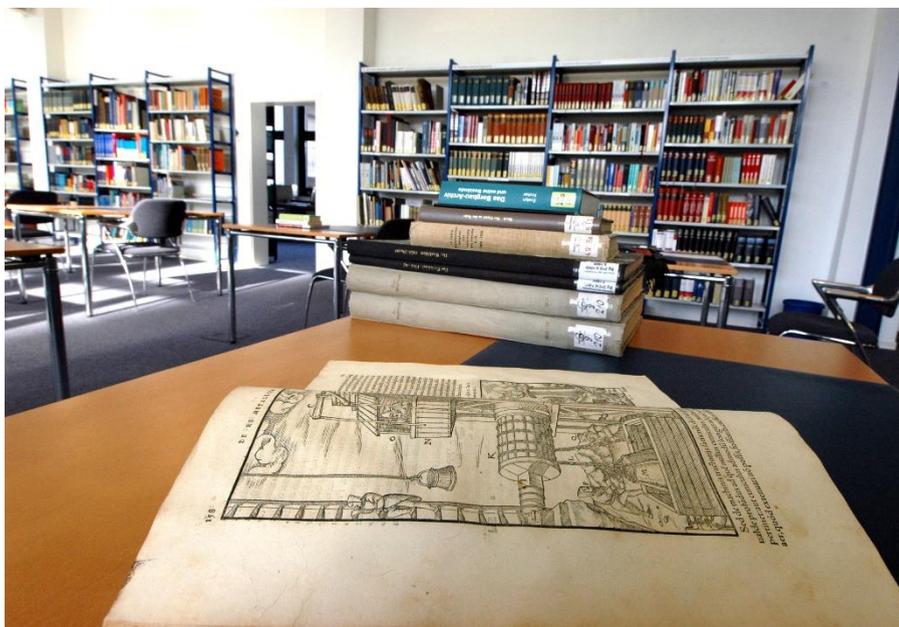
## **Several libraries under one roof**

The combination of the aspects of industrialisation and social movements, which at first glance do not necessarily appear to be related, are already inherent in the merging of older library holdings and complement each other, forming part of the region's memory, especially for the area along the Ruhr river. With these issues in mind, the BdR brought together holdings from important former libraries. These are in detail:

### **The Bergbau-Bücherei Essen**

In keeping with its importance for the former coal and steel region of the Ruhr, the mining library's holdings of around 240,000 volumes form the core of the older collection. Although the Ruhr area was a region without any university until 1964, there was a great need for specialist literature on the increasingly important technical, economic and social aspects of

mining due to the rapid development during industrialisation. In response to the industry's need, the 'Association for Mining Interests in the Higher Mining Office District of Dortmund' was founded in 1858.<sup>2</sup> The members of the association were mainly colliery companies. The association soon gained great economic and also political weight in the mining and industrial region. In 1861, a service library was set up, which for a long time focused on the technical challenges of mining, with a constant eye on other mining countries. In addition, the socio-political and settlement history of the Ruhr region, which was of great importance to the entrepreneurs, was considered in the acquisition of literature. As a special service, a documentation centre was set up within the library in 1924, which evaluated articles from its extensive collection of



Old meets new: Georgius Agricola's *De re metallica* in the reading room. Stiftung Geschichte des Ruhrgebiets.

international journals and systematised them according to the International Decimal Classification. This evaluation was carried out until the Ruhr Foundation was established in 1998 and created approximately 300,000 references, which can still be viewed today in card catalogues. Today, the documentary work is thematically related to the region and is being continued at the Ruhr Area Research Documentation Centre (*Dokumentationsstelle Ruhrgebietsforschung*). The records with content indexing can be searched in the regional online library union catalogue.<sup>3</sup>

## **The library of the former Union of Mining and Energy (IGBE)**

With the founding of the Mining, Chemical and Energy Workers' Union on 1 October 1997, the previous head office of the predecessor union IGBE (*Industriegewerkschaft Bergbau und Energie*) was dissolved.<sup>4</sup> The roots of the union's library collection lie in the free trade union *Verband deutscher Bergarbeiter* (Association of German Miners), though none of the original holdings survived the destruction of the trade unions by the National Socialists in the spring of 1933. After 1946, however, the collection was resumed. Appeals to trade union members and the acquisition of bequests led to a partial compensation of the wartime losses. Roughly speaking, the takeover of the trade union library of about 35,000 volumes can be understood as the addition of the social (workers' organisational) component of mining to the mining library.<sup>5</sup>

## **Library of the Institute for Social Movements**

The most recent of the predecessor libraries is that of the Institute for Social Movements (ISB), which is the successor institution to the Institute for Research on the European Labour Movement (IGA: *Institut zur Erforschung der europäischen Arbeiterbewegung*). As an interdisciplinary central academic unit, it enjoys a special status among the institutions of the Ruhr University Bochum.

When the *Ruhr-Universität Bochum* was founded in 1962, it was already clear that one of the focal points of the Faculty of History would be the study of social history, especially of the industrial working world. Without wanting to go into the exact steps of the institute's genesis here, it is of great importance for the current holdings that from 1971 onwards a library with a focus on the literature and the history of the workers' movement was established.<sup>6</sup> The basic collection consists of around 35,000 duplicates of monographs, journals and brochures of the International Institute of Social History (IISG) in Amsterdam.<sup>7</sup> With a volume count of about 140,000, the collection exceeds the usual level for an institute library and contains not only literature from (or about) trade unions and political left parties, but also extensive source material such as a collection of brochures and pamphlets from a wide variety of movements, of which Russian anarchists or the French women's movement are only to be mentioned here as examples.



Among the interesting sources of social movement studies are the pamphlets and brochures of the special Collection. Stiftung Geschichte des Ruhrgebiets, photo: Ulrike Moritz.

## Current acquisition

The library's acquisition policy is modified from that of its predecessor libraries, but in addition to the historical collection foci of mining, the Ruhr region and the workers' movement, there are other subject areas that are naturally related to the research activity at the ISB. The output of the research activities of the scholars or fellows is manifested not only in individual monographs and the academic series, but also in the peer-reviewed journal *Moving the Social*, which appears twice a year and is

dedicated to social movements of different orientations, whether – according to the traditional view – on the right or on the left.<sup>8</sup>

In terms of content, the House for the History of the Ruhr also continues to publish on trade union history, continuing the history of the institute; the supply of authors with literature is the responsibility of the BdR.<sup>9</sup> The fact that this trade union perspective is not detached from other models of society has led to a broadening of the researchers' perspective, from labour movements to social movements in general. At this point, it can only be hinted that in addition to the published trade union tradition, which also reacted to national movements, for example, the HGR also has a wealth of source material available for evaluation.

Geographically, too, the acquisition covers a larger area: In the context of industrial heritage research, a comparison with other industrial conurbations, including deindustrialisation and the way they deal with their industrial heritage, offers itself.<sup>10</sup> Migration and migration research of the different waves of industrialisation form a further focus and this in two respects: firstly, with regard to the political and social consequences of the countries connected by the migration event, and secondly, with regard to the action of social actors in the destination country.<sup>11</sup> The importance of the topic is also reflected in the current acquisitions, so that the subject group 'right-wing populism' for Germany alone comprises 260 books, for example.

The latter topic in particular, which has been the subject of passionate social debate since the 'refugee crisis' in 2015, clearly demonstrates the library's character as a place for international research and literary communication as well as for social debate with readings and conferences.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> <https://www.worldcat.org/de/libraries/147855> [accessed 7/3/2023].
- <sup>2</sup> W. Weber, 'Erschließen, Gewinnen, Fördern. Bergbautechnik und Montanwissenschaften von den Anfängen bis zur Gründung Technischer Universitäten in Deutschland', in *Geschichte des deutschen Bergbaus*, ed. by W. Weber (Münster: 2015), 381.
- <sup>3</sup> <<https://nrw.digibib.net/search/hbzvk>> [accessed 7/3/2023].
- <sup>4</sup> Stiftung Bibliothek des Ruhrgebiets; Institut für soziale Bewegungen (eds.), *Brückenschläge - Stiftung Bibliothek des Ruhrgebiets und Institut für Soziale Bewegungen* (Essen: 2008), 32.
- <sup>5</sup> Stiftung Bibliothek des Ruhrgebiets, *Brückenschläge*, 27.
- <sup>6</sup> P. Friedemann, *Tätigkeitsbericht 1988–1998. Von einer ‚Büchersammlung‘ zum Zentralinstitut der Ruhr-Universität und zur ‚Stiftung Bibliothek des Ruhrgebiets‘* (Essen: 1998).
- <sup>7</sup> Stiftung Bibliothek des Ruhrgebiets, *Brückenschläge*, 10–11.
- <sup>8</sup> <<https://www.isb.ruhr-uni-bochum.de/publikationen/index.html.de>> [accessed 14/2/2023]; <<https://moving-the-social.ub.rub.de/>> [accessed 6/2/2023]; vol. 64 (2020): '1968' in Britain; vol. 65 (2021): *Right-Wing Populist Movements and Gender*.
- <sup>9</sup> W. Jäger, *Arbeitsmigration und Gewerkschaft: die Recklinghäuser Tagung als migrationspolitisches Forum der Industriegewerkschaft Bergbau, Chemie, Energie* (Düsseldorf: 2022), <<http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:hbz:061:3-598948>> [accessed 14/2/2023].
- <sup>10</sup> A-S. Friedel, *Abschied von der Kohle. Struktur- und Kulturwandel im Ruhrgebiet und in der Lausitz*. (Bonn: 2022).
- <sup>11</sup> C. Tekin, *Debating Turkey in Europe. Identities and Concepts* (München, Wien: 2019).