SURVEY OF LIBRARIES IN AUSTRIA

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Shows the various stages of development of libraries. Gives an account of monastic libraries; private libraries, national library, university libraries, research libraries, popular libraries, and the Association of Austrian Librarians. Mentions the range of Indology collections in Austrian Libraries.

0 BACKGROUND

For more than a thousand years Austria has been in possession of libraries. They date back to the earliest Middle Ages and their beginnings are closely connected with the history of settlement of that part of Central Europe which later was to be named Austria. Today Austria is no longer a big power, but the fact that it is situated in the heart of Europe has linked up its fate with that of all the other European nations. As Austria has no natural boundaries towards the East, the sphere of influence of Eastern cultures which have been in existence for thousands of years always extended to central Europe. Even in antiquity, what is Austria today, was a bulwark of the Roman Empire. As soon as the storm of the migration of the nations had passed over it, it was again settled from the West. Peasants immigrated from the adjacent parts of Germany, but the representatives of spiritual culture frequently were monks from foreign countries. As Christianity was spreading the monks who migrated from Ireland, England or Scotland, brought with them a highly developed writing art and library culture. Very early they founded monasteries with libraries. Already around 700, a Benedictine monastery was founded at Salzburg, in 777 another at Kremsmunster, to mention only a few. More monasteries were founded in the 12th century in connection with the beginning and growth of the Cistercian Order.

1 MONASTIC LIBRARIES

The monastic libraries were of varying importance for the library history of the country. During the later Middle Ages and the Reformation they were in the background, but flourished a second time in the 18th century, when numerous monastic libraries were adorned with magnificent baroque reading halls, which often are the architectural pride of these monasteries even today. This late second flowering period of the monastic libraries is all the more remarkable as it occurs when the Age of Enlightenment has almost started during which a number of monasteries were dissolved. Generally speaking we can say that the monastic libraries have weathered all the storms of history up to the present. They often comprise more than 1,00,000 volumes, and thus represent a remarkable and often very valuable property. Any research worker is admitted to use the library on application, but the number of interested persons is naturally not very large. Al-
so it is difficult for the libraries to purchase modern literature.

2 PRIVATE LIBRARIES

As a next type of library we may mention the private libraries of the princes. Here we are concerned mainly with the House of the Hapsburgs because compared to them all the others were of minor importance. The Hapsburgs were eagerly collecting books as early as the 14th century. Duke Albrecht III (1395) had books copied and adorned with paintings. One of these manuscripts is now a specially valuable piece in the collections of the Austrian National Library. Such manuscripts, however, are not regarded as part of a library in our modern sense, but as a rare gem, and they are kept with the princely household treasures. The Emperor Maximilian I (1519), one of the most outstanding Hapsburgs, gathered many learned scholars at his court, and also wrote himself. He strongly promoted the art of printing which had just been invented and also made use of it for his purposes. Yet he cannot be called the founder of a library, although he certainly owned many books, because he had no residence. Only under Emperor Ferdinand (1564) Vienna became the imperial residence. This was the first step towards an imperial court library, the later Austrian National Library. Under Maximilian II (1576) for the first time an imperial librarian is mentioned who was in charge of the library, which then comprised 3000 volumes. Books began to be bought systematically, especially oriental books, by intervention of the imperial emissary to the court of Turkey. Besides these, ever since the invention of the printing press, the library received the presentation copies which had to be submitted in order to obtain a copyright; moreover (theoretically) since the Reformation every book had to be submitted for censoring.

3 IMPERIAL LIBRARY

During the 16th and 17th centuries Vienna and Austria were in constant danger from the Turks. The Turks, after the conquest of Constantinople (1453), gradually took possession of the whole Balkan peninsula and reached the gates of Vienna, which they besieged twice. Vienna was then regarded as the bulwark of the Christian Occident, and was freed from the second siege by a coalition army. The victory over the Turks was followed by a general material boom, which was beneficial also in a cultural respect. Besides many other palaces, a suitable building was at last erected for the Imperial Library (1723-1726). This truly imperial building is said to be the most beautiful baroque library in the world, and one of the most beautiful and largest architectural creations in the history of art. It is designed by Johann Bernhard Fischer von Erlach. When the building was completed the library comprised about 90,000 volumes. Today the hall houses about 200,000 volumes which, however, is less than one seventh of the total. Most of the books are kept in stack rooms which since the end of the last century have been constructed underneath the state room, partly above and partly below street level.

The library was named National Library after the end of the first world war, when the Hapsburg Empire ceased to exist and Austrian National Library after the end of the second world war in 1945.

4 UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

Austria's oldest University Library is that of the Vienna University. The University was founded in 1365, and shortly afterwards the Library was partly taken over by the Jesuits who set up Faculty Libraries and closed the main Library. The books were transferred to the Imperial Library. However, twenty years later, the University Library again came into existence. Today the University Library with its one and a half million books comes next only to the Austrian National Library, although it does not include equally valuable collections of manuscripts, incunabula, autographs, portraits, etc.

The Graz University Library was founded in 1586 during the Counter Reformation. Innsbruck University Library was started only in 1745 under the famous Empress Maria Theresa.

5 RESEARCH LIBRARIES

Today Austria is a federal state consisting of 9 provinces. In those of the provinces which do not possess a university so-called Research
Libraries were established. These libraries are also the regional depts for copyright copies, while the Austrian National Library is the only library to receive and store all the copyright copies of the country. It is worth noting that in Austria the University Libraries not only serve the professors and students, but like all large libraries in Austria, including the National Library, they are accessible to anybody who is interested, and practically for the asking. The establishment of the Research Libraries and their common administration dates back to 1848.

Apart from university and research libraries, various specialised establishments of university level have their own libraries. Veterinary High School (1777), Academy of Fine Arts (1774), Technical High School, Vienna (1845), Technical High School, Graz (1865), Mining Engineering High School, Leoben (1849), Agricultural High School (1872), School of International Trade (1897), Academy of Music and Dramatic Art (1309).

It is not possible to discuss in detail the numerous other scientific libraries of Austria in this paper. Among them are: the Library of the National Council, the Library of the Federal Chancellary, the libraries of the ministries, of the Patent Office, the Academy of Sciences, and many others. Each has a collection of more than 100,000 volumes. Together with the larger popular libraries they are given in the "Verzeichnis österreichischer Bibliotheken" (List of Austrian Libraries), Vienna 1913, (Biblos-Schriften, vol. 1).

6 POPULAR LIBRARIES

Popular Libraries were founded only around the middle of the 19th century (Michael Stickler, Die österreichische Volksbüchereibewegung. In: Biblos. Jg. 3(1954), H. 3.S. 92-103). Until after the first world war, Austrian Popular Libraries, Workers' Libraries, and also larger library associations aiming at adult education. In the thirties the Workers' Libraries were transferred to the local authorities. Since then they are similar to American public libraries. The largest local popular library system is that of the Municipal Libraries in the capital of the federation, Vienna. It has at present 44 branches and about 2,65,000 volumes. There is a network of Catholic Popular Libraries which in the first world war, Austrian Popular Libraries suffered most, it lost about 50,000 of its volumes which had been brought to a place where they were safe from bombs, but eventually suffered due to the occupation of Austria.

The main problem Austrian libraries have to face is the generally difficult financial situation after the war, which afflicts all the cultural institutions. However, recently public opinion underwent a change, and the libraries can expect sufficient means for the purchase, handling, and storing of the books, which will permit them to make vast improvements.

7 REORGANISATION

With regard to the collaboration of the Austrian libraries, the setting up of an Inspector General's Office of Austrian Scientific State Libraries was one of the outstanding achievements in the history of Austrian libraries. Prof. Dr. J. Bick, Director General of the Austrian National Library was the first to hold this office, and he made the following innovations already in the years between the two world wars:-(1) Consolidation of all scientific libraries under the Education Ministry to a system within which transfer of personnel is possible; (2) standardised training of librarians; introduction of a state examination for all academical and middle grade librarians; (3) standardisation of indexing rules for all the above mentioned libra-
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By following the instructions for the alphabetical catalogues of the Prussian Imperial Libraries on which the German Union Catalogue was based.

8 LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

After the second world war, the Association of Austrian Librarians was also revived which followed the traditions of the association which has been founded in 1896 as one of the world's oldest library associations. Since 1950 Librarians' Conferences have been held every two years (1950 at Salzburg, 1952 at Graz, 1954, in Vienna). Since 1954 technical periodical "Biblos" is published covering library science, documentation techniques, etc.

For Popular Libraries there is no library association. However, there is a Joint organisation of Popular Libraries instituted by the Education Ministry, which also holds public conferences. The publication of the Public Libraries is the New Adult Education (formerly Book and Library). A Popular Library law is planned in addition to a general adult education law.

9 INDOLOGY COLLECTIONS

We shall finally mention some Indian literature collections in Austrian libraries. Vienna has always been a centre of study of oriental history, cultures, and languages. On account of close diplomatic ties and trade relations between Austria and the Near East and especially Turkey, there has always been a keen interest in Arabic, Persian and Turkish. Well known scholars taught these subjects at the University of Vienna and the Imperial Library, the present Austrian National Library - which could therefore collect a large number of valuable manuscripts and all the important publications.

Indology was also a great favourite in Vienna from the earliest times onwards. Fredrich von Schlegel, founder of Indology in the German language area, carried on his work in Vienna after 1808. The Manuscript Collection of the Austrian National Library has now in its possession two volumes, which had belonged to him, containing copies of Indian texts, partly in Devanagari, partly in Bengali script, with transcription, partly with translations and comments. These volumes illustrate the first scientific impact of Indian languages in central Europe. The Manuscript Collection comprises about 150 Indian manuscripts, some of which are very valuable. Out of these 33 Sanskrit manuscripts, partly on birch bark and partly on paper, were purchased in Srinagar, Kashmir, in 1894. Another 42 volumes were also purchased. They are mainly literary Sanskrit manuscripts on birch bark and palm leaves. The rest of the collection consists of manuscripts in a variety of languages and scripts (Pali, Oriya, Telegu, Grantha, Tamil, Singhalese), and also religious and literary works, and letters. Mostly palm leaves were used as writing material, a few manuscripts only are written on bark or paper. The latter group of manuscripts came mainly from two large collections: the collection of Freiher von Hugel, and Karl von Scherzer. In 1830-36 Hugel travelled to the Near East and India and returned with large collections, among them the manuscripts which were incorporated in the then Imperial Library; Scherzer, an eager explorer and traveller who undertook three journeys round the world, travelled in India twice. Like Hugel, he returned to his country with valuable collections, parts of which are in the Austrian National Library. All the above mentioned manuscripts date back to the 17th and 19th centuries.

The library owns also two albums containing a large number of miniature paintings by the Moghul painters of the 16th to 18th centuries.

Apart from the manuscripts, the Austrian National Library includes numerous printed books, Indian as well as Indological works. Not only the Austrian National Library possess literature concerning India, but also the library of the Oriental Institute of the University of Vienna, and the library of the Institute for General and Comparative Philology and Indo-Iranian Philology of the University Graz.

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