

The Collection of the Jewish Community of Nuremberg in the Nuremberg Municipal Library - Looking for Previous Owners -

In its stockrooms, the Nuremberg Municipal Library has about 10,000 books, nowadays subsumed under the heading "Collection Jewish Community Nuremberg" (Sammlung Israelitische Kultusgemeinde IKG). Previously, most of these books belonged to persecuted persons and persons who were victims of the National Socialist reign of power, and between 1933 and 1945 were illegally taken from their owners – among them Jews, Freemasons, clergymen and activists and institutions connected with the labour movement and left-wing political parties. About a third of the books carry marks of provenance (signatures, book plates, stamps etc.) of former owners from 437 locations, mainly in Europe. The remaining books from Streicher's stolen collection were handed over to the City of Nuremberg on permanent loan by Nuremberg's Jewish Community (Israelitische Kultusgemeinde). For further information please see:

<https://www.nuernberg.de/internet/stadtbibliothek/sammlungikg.html>

The City of Nuremberg is committed to the Washington Agreement of 1998 and to the Statement of 14 December, 1999, by the Federal Government, the Federal States and the National Associations of Local Authorities on the tracing and return of Nazi-confiscated art, especially from Jewish property. In this declaration, the Federal Government, the Federal States and the National Association of Local Authorities declared their readiness to locate Nazi-confiscated art still held by public institutions, and to hand it back to legitimate former owners. In February, 2001, in further recommendations, the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and Media [Bundesbeauftragter für Kultur und Medien] called upon, amongst others, all German libraries to search their holdings for Nazi-confiscated books. Wherever possible, the libraries were to investigate and make public the circumstances of the acquisition of those books which were obviously Nazi-confiscated or which might be stolen property.

At the beginning of the extensive and time-consuming work of indexing and researching the former "Streicher Library", Nuremberg Municipal Library and the loaner, Nuremberg's Jewish Community, together decided to hand back the Nazi-confiscated books to their former owners or their legitimate successors, wherever possible. Staff from the Municipal Library therefore painstakingly recorded all marks of provenance in detail and by scan, and made them available for research in the electronic library catalogue (OPAC <https://www.nuernberg.de/internet/stadtbibliothek/kataloge.html>). Furthermore, nearly 2,000 books carrying marks of provenance and suspected of being illegally confiscated were listed in the Lost Art Internet Database, constituting a substantial part of that database. The Lost Art Internet Database is a joint project, organised by the Federal Republic and the Federal States for registering cultural objects which were relocated, moved or seized – especially from Jewish owners – in the course of Nazi persecutions.

Since the marks of provenance were transcribed as they were found in the books, an OPAC search for specific persons or institutions may be of limited help. Often the annotations found in the books are quite personal, and they may give incomplete information about former owners: in some cases, first names are shortened, and the owner's address and profession are mostly missing. However, in order to get one step closer to the aim of handing back the books, Nuremberg Municipal Library is publishing lists of former owners whose addresses and professions have been researched and verified as precisely as possible. Gradually, this lists will be expanded, until as many former owners as possible (persons and institutions) of books held in the Jewish Community's collection have been named with reasonable certainty.

The search list is intended to facilitate research by former owners or their legal successors. We ask anyone concerned to get in touch with Nuremberg Municipal Library, so that further steps may be taken.

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