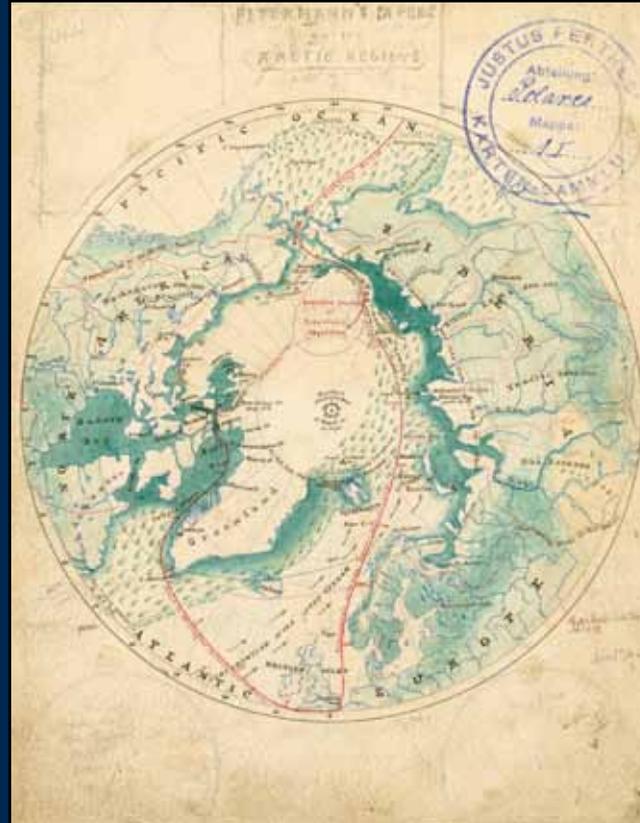


Bruno Hassenstein, Chart of Volcanoes Meru and Kilimanjaro, 1888

The collection's takeover in 2003 made obvious that the previous storage and indexing of it did not meet today's expectation of permanent preservation and usage. Those conditions did not allow to present the collection to researchers and the public.

Since 2003 thanks to generous promotion by the Thuringian Ministry of Education, several German cultural foundations like Deutsche Bundesstiftung Umwelt, Cultural Foundation of German Laender, German Research Foundation and private sponsors. Erfurt University Library has made efforts to preserve and use "Perthes collection". This includes various projects like recording the publishers' products and library, in a catalogue, cleaning and reorganization of the map collection, conservation and indexing of both copperplates and archives. The products and parts of the library can already be researched online. Representing Gotha's tradition of car



August Petermann, Polar Chart, before 1852

tography and geography and being unique in Europe as well as for its stock going back to the Middle Ages this collection shall be presented as an outstanding example at the Ducal Library of Friedenstein Castle, Gotha or "Perthes Forum" in the near future.

## Perthes Collection Gotha



**Universitäts- und Forschungs-  
bibliothek Erfurt/Gotha**



Adolf Stieler, Handatlas, 1817

In 1778 Johann Georg Justus Perthes, the bookseller Carl Wilhelm Ettinger and the copperplate engraver Friedrich Duereld established a trading company in Gotha. In 1785 Perthes became self-employed. He took over the publishing house of the "Almanach de Gotha" which since 1763 had been released by Ettinger. The "Gotha" which became known worldwide as one of the major European encyclopedias of the aristocracy can be seen as the beginning of successful Justus Perthes publishers.

But when Justus Perthes (he died in 1816) and his descendants devoted themselves to the publication of modern, scientific atlases these publishers became more important. The convenient atlas by Adolf Stieler which from 1817 to 1945 was released in 11 editions - was the top product and one of the most excellent atlases of modern times that found worldwide recognition. The success of the "Stieler" was the reason for the company's production to

become one of the most important and leading publishers in the market of cartography and geography in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Outstanding cartographers and geographers of the 19th century like Heinrich und Hermann Berghaus, Karl Spruner, Carl Vogel and Bruno Hassenstein worked for the company. Winning over August Petermann as an employee in 1854 can be seen as some stroke of luck. Petermann who had worked as a cartographer in England before made his new publishers due to his connections the renowned centre of collecting and spreading geographic knowledge in those days. "Geographic Statements" edited by Petermann since 1855 served as a key publication. This significant specialized magazine which was sold all over Europe in the 19th century was used by pioneers exploring Africa, Asia and the Pole like Heinrich Barth, Adolf Erik Nordenskiöld and Sven Hedin. Employees of the publishing company transformed the results of their explorations into an excellent cartography. Since the 2nd half of the 19th century the company gained a leading position in the development of school atlases which were linked with the names of Emil von Sydow, Hermann Wagner and Hermann Haack as the publishers had always expected to make geographical facts popular publicly.

Evidence older than 200 years of Perthes publishers can be found in the historic buildings in Gotha up to now. They contain more than 185,000 maps, 120,000 volumes of the publishers' library, 1,600 copperplates and 800 metres of archive. Because of their unity and connection they can be considered as a unique example of the last stage of the exploring era which was lastingly coined by Perthes publishers. In January 2003 the state of Thuringia supported by the Cultural Foundation of German Laender was able to acquire this wide-ranging collection. After handing it over to the University of Erfurt the stock called "Perthes Collection" is now looked after by the university library.

## Universitäts- und Forschungsbibliothek Erfurt/Gotha

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### Further information on the Internet:

<http://www.uni-erfurt.de/bibliothek/>  
<http://www.uni-erfurt.de/sammlung-perthes/>

Cover picture:

Hermann Berghaus,  
Chart of the World in Star projection, 1880

Text: Kathrin Paasch, Petra Weigel  
Layout, Fotos: Sergej Tan  
Translation: Axel Loth

