



The Gotha Perthes Collection at a glance

In 2003, the Free State of Thuringia acquired the Perthes Collection with funds provided by the Kulturstiftung der Länder (KSL) (Federal Cultural Foundation). It was taken over by the Gotha Research Library, part of the University of Erfurt, for safekeeping and management.

Components

The Perthes Collection consists of three parts – the Map Collection, the Library of the Publishing House and the Archive. The *Map Collection* holds approx. 185,000 map folios, including 10,000 navigational marine charts and 3,450 wall maps for schools. The *Library of the Publishing House* contains approx. 120,000 volumes, including 2,200 atlases and 800 shorter compilations. The *Archive* covers approx. 800 metres and holds archived material pertaining to the 200-year history of the publishing house, a specimen collection of the publications and more than 1,600 copper plates. Archive material of special significance includes the exchange of letters and researchers' estates associated with the editorial body of "Petermanns Geographische Mitteilungen", as well as correspondence with staff and friends of the publishing house .

Significance

The Perthes Collection ranks among the largest geographical-cartographic collections in Europe. It grew out of the historical collections of the Gotha-based Justus Perthes Verlag (Justus Perthes Publishing House), established in 1785, which – in addition to contemporary map series – also published the "Almanach de Gotha" / "Gothaischer Hofkalender". The Perthes Collection contains unique source material relating to the development of cartography and geography in the 19th and 20th centuries. In the cohesion and interlinking of its holdings, the Collection documents the last phase of the age of discovery, during which the interior regions of the non-European continents and the polar regions were explored. The maps, atlases and periodicals published by Perthes, most notably "Stielers Handatlas" and "Petermanns Geographische Mitteilungen", shaped the scientific view of the earth until well into the 20th century and popularised it among the general public. Alongside the topographical and thematic map series, there was a diverse and wide-ranging publishing programme in the fields of cartography, geography and education, in which "Petermanns Geographische Mitteilungen" stands out as the most significant specialist geographical periodical of the 19th century.

Ongoing projects

Since taking over the Collection, a comprehensive programme of strategies for the conservation of the holdings, primary indexing and popularisation of the Perthes

Collection has been implemented by the University and Research Library; since 2006, these have been completed under numerous projects. The projects are supported by the Kulturstiftung der Länder (KSL) (Federal Cultural Foundation), the Deutsche Bundesstiftung Umwelt (DBU) (German Federal Foundation for the Environment), the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) (German Research Foundation), the Thuringian Ministry of Education, Science and Culture – and private donors.

1. Indexing the Archive of the Publishing House

Thanks to the support provided by the Thuringian Ministry of Education, Science and Culture and private sponsors, in 2010 an appointment was made to the position of Archivist, a three-year appointment to index the historical Archive of the Publishing House.

2. Conservation and indexing of copper plates

The remit of the position of Academic Consultant for the Perthes Collection, a role sponsored by the Kulturstiftung der Länder (KSL) (Federal Cultural Foundation) for a total of three years, includes the indexing of copper plates. Those copper plates that have been particularly badly damaged by corrosion are being restored in a joint project run by the University of Erfurt in conjunction with the Faculty of Civil Engineering and Conservation/Restoration at the University of Applied Sciences in Erfurt. The restoration technique developed by students of the University of Applied Sciences was presented to the public in 2012.

Completed projects

1. Indexing of publications

In a cataloguing project supported by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) (German Research Foundation), the publications held in the Archive of the Publishing House were recorded in national databases. The project was concluded in January 2008.

2. Indexing of the Library of the Publishing House

The holdings of the Library were catalogued in national databases in a four-year library indexing project supported by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) (German Research Foundation). The project was concluded in July 2011.

3. Design of an Internet portal

The remit of the position of Academic Consultant for the Perthes Collection, a role sponsored by the Kulturstiftung der Länder (KSL) (Federal Cultural Foundation) since 2008 for a total of three years, covered the design of an Internet portal. The homepage of the Perthes Collection has been accessible since the end of 2010.

4. Pilot project for cleaning, de-dusting, reorganising and primary indexing of the Map Collection

In a project sponsored by the Deutsche Bundesstiftung Umwelt (DBU) (German Federal Foundation for the Environment), a pilot project was developed that involved dry-cleaning the bulk paper holdings in the Map Collection, which were varied in terms of paper grade and writing materials. The cleaning and de-dusting of the maps constitute the basis for the reorganisation of the Collection and its initial recording in a database. The project was concluded in June 2012.

Research

The Perthes Collection is a strategic partner in a series of research projects, including with the University of Erfurt and the Leibniz-Institut für Länderkunde (Leibniz Institute for Regional Geography) in Leipzig. Since September 2012, a three-year pilot project entitled “Globalisation and Local Knowledge” focusing on collection-related research into the Justus Perthes cartographic and geographical publishing house and supported by the Thuringian Ministry of Education, Science and Culture has been in progress at the Research Centre in Gotha. The project aims to highlight the research potential of the Perthes Collection in full for the first time and to establish a virtual map platform (“GlobMapLaboratory”), which is capturing first attempt to record the Collection digitally.

Public relations activities

The Perthes Collection has been accessible to the public through fixed event formats since 2010, namely in the course of the annual “Gothaer Kartenwochen” (Gotha Map) and through the series “Perthes im Gespräch” (“Perthes Talking”), which reports the latest news about indexing, conservation and research in connection with the Gotha Perthes Collection every quarter.

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