

## Paper Bridges: Conservation, Restoration, Cataloguing and Digitization of German-language Newspapers from Southeastern Europe in a One-Person-Library

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### Abstract:

*The Institute for German Culture and History of Southeastern Europe at Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München (IKGS) collects and researches the history of ethnic Germans in Southeastern Europe, with a focus on Romania and Hungary. After World War II, Eastern European countries expelled most Germans from their territories. Many of those had inhabited these lands for centuries, developing a unique culture. Between 12 and 16,5 million ethnic Germans and German citizens were expelled westwards, many of whom resettled in Germany. The IKGS library and archive preserve their written cultural heritage like books, writings and personal estate, including materials from about three centuries.*

*The library holds one of the biggest collections of German-language newspapers and periodicals from Southeastern Europe in Germany. It consists of rare original materials and microfilms and covers the period from 1750 to the present. The collection is used by researchers from all over the world, mainly from Germany, Romania and Hungary, but also from the U. S. and Australia.*

*Because of the fact that the library runs as an OPL, the conservation, restoration, cataloguing and digitization of the newspapers and periodicals can only be achieved with the help of cooperation partners and volunteers, due to financial and staff reasons. This paper intends to present the project "Paper Bridges" as a best-practice example of how also small libraries can preserve and digitize their newspaper collections.*

**Keywords:** displaced persons, cultural heritage, German-language Newspapers, preservation, One-Person-Library

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The Institute for German Culture and History of Southeastern Europe at Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München (IKGS) collects and researches the history of ethnic Germans in Southeastern Europe, with a focus on Romania and Hungary. After World War II, Eastern European countries expelled most Germans from their territories. Many of those had inhabited these lands for centuries, developing a unique culture. Between 12 and 16,5 million ethnic Germans and German citizens were expelled westwards, many of whom resettled in

Germany. The IKGS library and archive preserves the written cultural heritage of this so called “displaced persons” like books, writings and personal estate. The collection includes materials from about three centuries. For example, the library holds the personal estate of Richard Wagner, who is not only a well-known writer himself, about also was married to the nobel prize winner in literature Herta Müller, who is also a German of Romania.

The Institute for German Culture and History of Southeastern Europe with its library exists since 1951 and has the structure of a private association. It is institutionally funded by the Federal Commissioner for Culture and the Media (BKM) in accordance with § 96 BVFG (Federal Displaced Persons and Refugees Act). Since 2004 the institute is an affiliated institute to the University of Munich. Only since 2016 the library is managed by a professional librarian and runs as a One-Person-Library.

As a special collection the library holds one of the biggest collections of German-language newspapers and periodicals from Southeastern Europe in Germany. It consists of rare original materials and microfilms and covers the period from 1750 to the present, in detail 130 titles on 1000 microfilm rolls and 500 printed periodicals, among them 133 current periodicals, such as the *Allgemeine Deutsche Zeitung für Rumänien* (ADZ), a daily German-language newspaper in Romania. It is currently the only daily German-language newspaper from Eastern Europe and was founded in 1949 as *Neuer Weg*. The IKGS library holds copies from 1954 to the present.

Because the library runs as an OPL, the conservation, restoration, cataloguing and digitization of the newspapers and periodicals can only be achieved with the help of cooperation partners, due to financial and staff reasons. This paper intends to present the project “Paper Bridges” as a best-practice example of how also small libraries can preserve and digitize their newspaper collections.

### **Conservation and Restoration**

In 2017, the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media (BKM) in Germany launched a special program for the long-term protection and preservation of written cultural heritage and supports projects in libraries and archives.

In 2018 the library of the Institute for German Culture and History of South Eastern Europe (IKGS) has successfully submitted a project application for the deacidification and restoration of rare German language newspapers and magazines on the everyday culture of the German-speaking minority in Romania to the Coordination Office for the Preservation of the Written Cultural Heritage in Germany (KEK)<sup>1</sup>.

The project ensures the long-term preservation of 26 original newspapers and journals, all of which reflect everyday culture in the former German settlement areas in Romania. The restored collection comprises six meters of shelving and includes school programs, pocket calendars and yellow press newspapers. The IKGS has either unique ownership of many of the selected titles throughout Germany or the largest coherent collection of originals. As an example, the *Neue Jüdische Rundschau* (English: New Jewish Review), a German-language weekly newspaper from Chernivtsi (Ukraine), published from 1926 to 1930, has only been listed in the IKGS and in the National Library of Israel so far.

The 26 German-language newspapers and periodicals from the project “Paper Bridges” are either not preserved in their original areas or are rarely available and accessible in libraries open to the public. They date from the period from 1837 to 1944, in which industrially

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<sup>1</sup> For detailed information about the activities of the Coordination Office for the Preservation of the Written Cultural Heritage see: Our mission [2019-05-30] available at: <http://kek-spk.de/en/about-us/institution/>

produced, acidic paper was used. The acid makes the paper brittle and in danger of decomposing. In addition, the holdings show numerous signs of damage due to wrong storage. Through mass deacidification techniques the durability of the paper could be quadrupled. The following restoration and protective packaging of these rare collections also contributes to the long-term preservation of the original. These conservation measures, through which the collection is now accessible for researchers, could only be carried out with the financial support of the Coordination Office for the Preservation of the Written Cultural Heritage in Germany, who covered 80% of the costs.

### **Cataloguing**

the microfilms are already listed in the online catalogue of the microfilm archive of the German-language press, but since 2018 is carried out a retrospective conversion in the German Union Catalogue of Serials (ZDB). The German Union Catalogue of Serials is the world's largest dedicated database for serials of all kinds, particularly journals and newspapers. It currently contains more than 1.8 million bibliographic records for publications in all languages from the 16th century onwards and more than 15.6 million holding records of around 3,700 German and Austrian libraries.<sup>2</sup> The cataloguing of the microfilms in the Union Catalogue of Serials as a central reference instrument not only makes it easier to search for newspapers, but also has the advantage that the various types of material and their secondary forms (printed, microfilm, CD-ROM and online) are listed together in a single directory. This means that the proof of stock of a newspaper can be displayed without gaps. As a further result of the cataloguing of the periodicals and microfilm rolls in the German Union Catalogue of Serials, which is also used for interlibrary loans, the number of interlibrary loan requests in the IKGS library has increased by 10% since the beginning of 2019.

### **Volunteerism**

For cataloguing the original materials and the microfilms in the Union Catalogue of Serials (ZDB) the IKGS library was able to hire a volunteer librarian for three months. She is a professional librarian and was born in Transylvania in Romania and is a member of the German-speaking minority. She does not only have the necessary language skills, but also the personal background, because she comes from the region concerned and she is a so called "displaced persons" herself.

So how come she's helping me out as a volunteer? For six years now she and her husband have been travelling around the world in a small sailing boat. For two to three months every year she needs solid ground under her feet and comes to Munich. While she is in Munich, she regularly supports in the library so that she can follow the current developments during her trip around the world and so that it is easier for her to return to the librarianship after her return.

In addition, the library offers since 2016 a volunteer position through the Federal Volunteers Service of Germany. The Federal Volunteers Service (German: Bundesfreiwilligendienst) is a German government program which encourages volunteerism for public welfare, especially for social, ecological and cultural engagement and is a replacement for the former Civil Service. In this program the IKGS offers the opportunity for school graduates to gain an impression about the work in a library and in an academic environment, so that they can make a better decision about their future field of studies. The volunteer usually stays for a whole year and helps in the cataloguing, book processing, library lending and in the bookstacks. Within the framework of the Paper bridges project, the

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<sup>2</sup> The German Union Catalogue of Serials (ZDB). [2017-09-27] Available at: [https://www.dnb.de/EN/Wir/Kooperation/zdb/zdb\\_node.html](https://www.dnb.de/EN/Wir/Kooperation/zdb/zdb_node.html)

volunteers assisted in quantity determination of the stocks for mass deacidification and in duplicate verification in the cataloguing process of microfilms.

### **Digitization**

The digitization of German-language newspapers and journals from Southeastern Europe is a special case, as many publishing houses had to close during communism because of political pressure and remained without a legal successor. In this case it is very difficult to get permission for digitization due to still valid intellectual property rights. This is also the reason why for many newspapers the preservation of the original must be prioritized.

Furthermore, the IKGS library does not own the necessary technical infrastructure to digitize the historical newspapers on its own.

Nevertheless, the IKGS cooperates with several partners for the microfilming and digitization of periodicals such as Babeş-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca, Romania, the University of Regensburg in Germany, the provider Central and Eastern European Online Library (CEEOL) and the Digital Forum Central and East Europe (DiFMOE).

Through these cooperative efforts the IKGS is able to digitize and present newspapers and journals in the digital library of DiFMOE and on other digital platforms to scholars and the general public.

Since the digital library of DiFMOE is probably the least known of the above mentioned cooperation partners, but at the same time the most important partner for the IKGS library, I would like to briefly introduce this institution.

The Digital Forum Central and Eastern Europe (in German: Digitales Forum Mittel- und Osteuropa e.V. (DiFMOE)) was founded as a non-profit organization in 2008 in Munich. Its goal is the digitization of mainly historical German-language periodicals, books, archive materials and pictures of Eastern and Southeastern Europe and to make them freely accessible through its own web portal [www.difmoe.eu](http://www.difmoe.eu). Libraries, archives and academic institutions from Austria, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia and Slovenia are currently cooperating with the association by providing relevant content from their physical or digital collections. The current volume of the portfolio is about 1.6 million pages, with additional digitized items from ongoing projects being added. Main sponsor of past and present projects is the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media (Germany). The IKGS has digitized already 12 newspapers and magazines in cooperation with DiFMOE, among them 10 in German language and in total 113.378 pages.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> detailed list of newspapers and magazines digitized in cooperation with DiFMOE:

1. Kaschau-Eperieser Kundschaftsblatt: Lokalblatt für Volks-, Haus- und Landwirthschaft, Industrie und geselliges Leben; Place of publication: Kaschau; Course of publication: 1838-1871; Digitized volumes: 1847, 1850-1853, 1855-1859, 1861-1867, 1870, 1871; Number of pages: 5.232

2. Kaschauer Zeitung: Kassa-eperjesi értesítő; Place of publication: Kaschau; Course of publication: 1872-1914; Digitized volumes: 1872-1914; Number of pages: 33.296

3. Kassai szemle: Politikai, társadalmi, kereskedelmi s ipari érdekeket képviselő; Place of publication: Kassa; Course of publication: 1885-1893; Digitized volumes: 1885-1893; Number of pages: 4.243

4. Felsőmagyarország: Kassai szemle; Place of publication: Kassa; Course of publication: 1894-1919; Digitized volumes: 1894-1901, 1903-1918; Number of pages: 44.378

5. Die Karpathen: Halbmonatsschrift für Kultur und Leben; Place of publication: Braşov; Course of publication: 1907-1914; Digitized volumes: 1907-1914; Number of pages: 5.348

6. Allgemein-jüdische illustrierte Wochenschrift; Place of publication: Timișoara; Course of publication: 1932; Digitized volumes: 1932; Number of pages: 116

7. Neue Jüdische Rundschau; Place of publication: Chernivtsi; Course of publication: 1926-1930; Digitized volumes: 1926-1930; Number of pages: 677

The latest project of the Digital Forum Central and Eastern Europe (DiFMOE), which is called "German Jewish Bukovina 1918+" started in May 2019. It has the focus on the digitization of German-language newspapers published in the historical region of Bukovina<sup>4</sup> during the interwar period and the second world war. In addition, the digitization of historical newspapers will be supplemented with contemporary periodicals published by the surviving Jewish population who has emigrated from Bukovina. Many of whom settled in USA and Israel, but still had German as their main language. An example of a German-language journal in Israel is the serial *Die Stimme: Mitteilungsblatt für die Bukowiner* (in English: *The Voice: Newsletter for the Bukovins*), published from 1944 to 2017 in Tel-Aviv. The library of the Institute for German Culture and History of Southeastern Europe, as a cooperation partner in the "German Jewish Bukovina 1918+" project, will supply approx. 50% of the holdings intended for digitization, for example the Czernowitzer Allgemeine Zeitung (English: Chernivtsi Newspaper) from 1923 to 1938 or the Czernowitzer Morgenblatt (English: Chernivtsi Morning News) from 1923 to 1940. In this project, microfilms will serve as originals for the digitization. In return, the IKGS will receive copies of the digitized material free of charge and at the same time has made its holdings accessible online via the DiFMOE digital library.

### User groups

The newspaper stocks in the IKGS-Library basically have two different user groups. On the one hand there are students and researchers, mainly from Germany, Romania and Hungary. But there are user requests also from USA and Australia. The requests for scientific use mostly want to find sources on certain political events or try to understand how the newspaper as a mass medium has influenced people's opinions. On the other hand, the second group of users are usually people who belong to the group of displaced persons themselves. They usually research concrete content, which is often associated with their own biography or that of persons known to them. This often involves genealogical research.

A special kind of use, which is rather unusual in an academic library, was the request of a daughter of an eighty-year-old man who had to emigrate from Bukovina as a child. He wanted a copy of a daily newspaper of his date of birth from his hometown Chernivtsi.

This example clearly shows why the German-language newspapers from Southeastern Europe are "Paper bridges". They are often one of the few remaining links between the old and the new homelands, but also between the past and the present.

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8. Neue Zeit: Jüdisches Wochenblatt: Place of publication: Timișoara; Course of publication: 1920-1940; Digitized volumes: 1923-1930; Number of pages: 7.053

9. Ostjüdische Zeitung: Organ der Jüdischen Nationalpartei in der Bukowina; Place of publication: Chernivtsi; Course of publication: 1919-1937; Digitized volumes: 1919-1937; Number of pages: 9.367

10. Südböhmische Volkszeitung: Unabhängiges Wochenblatt für völkische und wirtschaftliche Rechte der Deutschen Südböhmens; Place of publication: České Budějovice; Course of publication: 1901-1938; Digitized volumes: 1936-1938; Number of pages: 3.292

11. Almanahul evreiesc : Zsidó évkönyv: Jüdisches Jahrbuch; Place of publication: Timișoara; Course of publication: 1935; Digitized volumes: 1935; Number of pages: 189

12. Israelitischer Kalender; Place of publication: Temeschwar; Course of publication: 1926-1930; Digitized volumes: 1926-1930; Number of pages: 187

<sup>4</sup> Bukovina (Romanian: Bucovina; German: Bukowina/Buchenland; Polish: Bukowina; Hungarian: Bukovina, Ukrainian: Буковина Bukovyna) is a historical region located on the northern slopes of the central Eastern Carpathians and the adjoining plains, today divided between Romania and Ukraine. According to census data the Bucovina had a German population of 20% in 1910, among 60% of them were Jewish. During the two world wars, the percentage of Germans in the total population fell significantly. In 1944, only 0.3% of the population were Germans. See: Sundhausen, Holm and Clewing, Konrad (ed.): Lexikon zur Geschichte Südosteuropas, 2. erweiterte und aktualisierte Auflage, Wien, 2016, pp. 197-199.

## **Conclusion**

When you work in a small library, especially in a One-person-Library little money and little personnel is always an issue. But monetary reasons may be a difficulty in carrying out projects, but may also be an excuse. The project "Paper Bridges" shows that through cooperation and dialogue with other, not only librarian institutions, and support by volunteers, even a small institution can realize attractive projects. In the end it is all about people, if they take the challenge and make a success out of it.

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