

1939

1945

Une
bibliothèque
dans la
tourmente*

Bibliothèque Humaniste

8 février

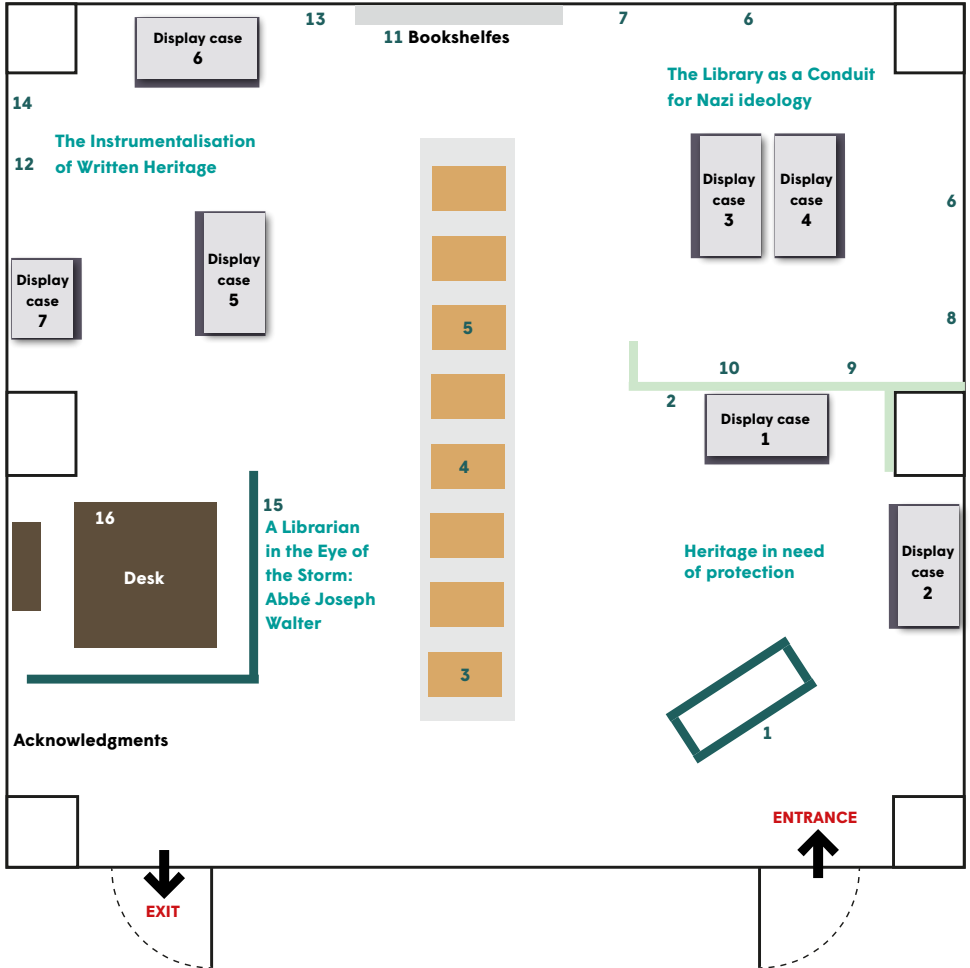
1^{er} juin 2025



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Exhibition plan



1. on plan

Heritage Under Threat: Manipulation and Confiscation

The 80th anniversary of the Liberation of Sélestat provides an opportunity to retrace the history of the Humanist Library and its collections during the Second World War. Along with the region's other artistic treasures, the written heritage housed in Sélestat was the subject of protective measures put in place by the authorities in 1938.

After the de facto annexation of Alsace in 1940, Sélestat's municipal library, along with the region's other libraries, was used as a propaganda tool by the Nazis. This "Nazification" extended to the collections available to the public, as well as the appropriation of historic tomes presented as emblems of an "eternal Germany". In Sélestat in particular, one man played a crucial role in protecting the collections of the Humanist Library: Abbé Joseph Walter (1881-1952), the town's chief librarian and archivist from 1919 to 1950.

2. on plan

Heritage in Need of Protection

The 1930s saw Europe slowly, inexorably marching towards another devastating war, especially once the Nazis took

power in Germany in January 1933.

In 1938, the French Ministry for Education and Fine Arts adopted measures designed to protect the artistic treasures of Alsace in the event of a German invasion.

In the Autumn of 1938, Hitler's annexation of the Sudetenland from Czechoslovakia caused many to fear that a declaration of war was imminent. Between Friday 23 September and Monday 3 October 1938, Sélestat's most precious volumes and the town archives were packed into wooden crates and transferred to the cellars of the Halle aux Blés for safekeeping.

In the spring of 1940 – during the period known as the "Phoney War" because little fighting occurred, despite the fact that war had been declared on 3 September 1939 – a decision was taken to transfer the most precious sections of the municipal collections of Strasbourg, Colmar and Sélestat to Château de Hautefort, in the Dordogne. On 1st March 1940, a special train left Sélestat containing the town's cherished literary heritage, packed into 127 cases. Sélestat's chief librarian, Abbé Joseph Walter, personally oversaw the transferral of the cases to their temporary home, travelling to the south-west of France from 6 to 11 March. In the summer of 1940, the Nazis demanded the return of the most precious works to the Humanist Library.

These volumes arrived back in Sélestat in October of that year. In order to protect them from Allied bombing, the books were transferred to the Château du Haut-Koenigsbourg on 7 December 1942, remaining there until July 1945.

On the ramp - middle of the exhibition room



Set of wooden cases used several times to transport the most valuable items from the collections of the municipal library of Sélestat during the Second World War. These cases were used to transport the most precious collections of the Humanist Library several times during World War Two.

Humanist Library of Sélestat, 23 Fi 6



Cover of a case used to transport the collections of the Library of Strasbourg's Grand Seminary (facsimile)

Bibliothèque du Grand Séminaire de Strasbourg.

Along with the oldest volumes from the collections of the Humanist Library, the most precious tomes from the library of the Grand Seminary were also transferred to the south-west of France. However, they did not return to Alsace along with the other cultural and historical treasures demanded by the Nazi authorities in the summer of 1940, probably because they had been well hidden in a presbytery.

3. on plan



View of the main reading room in the Humanist Library,
[sometime between 1924 and 1951]

Humanist Library of Sélestat, photographic collection.

This photograph offers a glimpse of what this space, used to present and store the library's precious tomes, would have looked like during Abbé Joseph Walter's tenure as head librarian. Abbé Walter can be seen here, in the centre of the photo. As head librarian, he reorganised the main reading room and installed the Saint Anne altarpiece seen in the background, taken from the Spetz collection, along with plaster cast reproductions of some of the statues from Strasbourg cathedral.

4. on plan



View of the entrance to the Château de Hautefort,
[1st half of 20th century]

Photograph supplied by the Hautefort, Notre Patrimoine association.

The Château de Hautefort is located in the village of the same name, in the Dordogne département. Its presence is attested in documents dating back to the 12th century, but the current château was constructed in the 16th-17th centuries. It is here that Alsace's cultural riches were transferred for safekeeping in the early days of WWII, including the most precious works from the Humanist Library.

5. on plan

Display case No. 1:

Report to the Mayor regarding the protection of the Library and Archives in the event of a War, 6 October 1938.

Sélestat municipal archives, PA.218

In this document, head librarian Abbé J. Walter describes the initial measures taken to protect the collections in the Autumn of 1938, at a time when the outbreak of war seemed increasingly inevitable following the annexation of the Sudetenland (part of Czechoslovakia) by the Reich. Walter reports that, of the 135 cases he requested, twenty were delivered on the morning of Friday 23 September, and for that reason “a temporary floor was set up in the cellar [of the Halle aux Blés]. Ten schoolboys (...), working under the supervision of the librarian and the concierge, handled the transferral to this cellar of the entire historical library and the archives.”

Inventory of the 127 cases containing the collections of the Humanist Library, the manuscript collection, the most important items from the municipal archives and a few precious objects. These cases were sent to Château d’Hautefort in Dordogne on 1st March 1940.

Archives of the Humanist Library of Sélestat

This document describes in detail the contents of the cases used to transfer the collections to the south-west of France. Cases 1 to 9 held the manuscripts, while cases 7 to 52 and 57 to 68 contained printed works from the 15th and 16th centuries. Cases 68 to 119 housed the municipal archives, and case 120 was reserved for volumes from the library of Alexandre Dorlan. Various artworks from the museum were packed up in cases 121 to 125; case 126 held the archives of the parish of Saint-Georges, while case 127 was primarily given over to Abbé Walter’s reconstruction of the Hortus deliciarum or Garden of Delights by Abbess Herrade de Hohenbourg, a manuscript which disappeared in 1870.

Librarian’s report in preparation for the return of the works transferred for safekeeping to Château de Hautefort in the Dordogne (8 July 1940).

Archives of the Humanist Library of Sélestat

No sooner had the German troops invaded Alsace than the occupying authorities were demanding the return of the artistic treasures which had been transferred for safekeeping to the south-west of France. In this report, the librarian describes the transportation, on 1st March 1940, of 127 cases containing manuscripts and printed volumes from the 15th and 16th centuries. There were also six further cases containing artworks, and two more containing historical archives and religious artefacts from the parish of Saint-Georges.

Display case No. 2:

Documents pertaining to the protection of the precious collections of the Humanist Library by the Nazi authorities.

Archives of the Humanist Library of Sélestat

In 1942 Hitler's armies were driven back on multiple fronts, while the risks posed by Allied bombing became increasingly clear. Keen to ensure the preservation of these valuable artefacts of German culture, in December 1942 the Nazi authorities decided to transfer the most valuable items from the collections of the Humanist Library to the Château du Haut-Koenigsbourg, along with the Issenheim altarpiece from the Unterlinden Museum and a number of tapestries from Strasbourg cathedral. In July 1945, Sélestat's treasures finally returned to the Halle aux Blés.

Report of the Town Librarian-Archivist [of Sélestat] on the Expurgation of Public and Private Libraries, 15 June 1945.

Archives of the Humanist Library of Sélestat

In this report, addressed to the sub-prefect of Sélestat, Abbé Joseph Walter provides an overview of the books and libraries introduced to the region by the Nazis. The most sizeable legacy of their presence was a cache of 3,000 volumes from the popular library, "consigned to a room away from prying eyes, although we do not expect visitors." Known as the "Nazi library" this collection is still conserved at the Humanist Library, testament to this dark period in the modern history of Sélestat.

Memorandum addressed to France's Department for National Education – Libraries Division: the moral demobilisation of Germany and the national interest, particularly in Alsace, 7 May 1945.

Archives of the Humanist Library of Sélestat

A great expert on the cultural life of Alsace, Abbé Joseph Walter put this knowledge to good use to avoid any risk that Germany may once again be able to "forge new weapons to lay claim to Alsace." In particular, he highlighted the role played before the war by the Institute for Alsatians and Lorrainians in the Reich, based in Frankfurt and acting as a hotbed of Pan-Germanist ideas, which it sought to disseminate in Alsace. Abbé Walter devoted special attention to the future task of reclaiming lost works: "in many libraries in Germany, there are precious manuscripts and archives of Alsatian provenance which should be repatriated, by way of reparation for previous losses and in the interests of moral demobilisation, as a guarantee for the future."

6. on plan

The Library as a Conduit for Nazi ideology

After the false start of the “phoney war”, German troops crossed the Rhine on 15 May 1940 and swept through Alsace. Sélestat was occupied on 17 June 1940. The whole of Alsace was annexed by Germany, and attached to the Gau (administrative region) of Baden.

Robert Wagner (1895-1946), a close ally of Adolf Hitler, was appointed Gauleiter of the Oberrhein by the Führer on 20 June 1940. As governor of the entire Upper Rhine region, encompassing both Alsace and the state of Baden, he exercised unbridled power on both sides of the Rhine. Hitler had tasked Wagner with ‘Germanising’ Alsace within a decade, but the Gauleiter promised to achieve this goal in just five years. The region fell under the yoke of the Nazi dictatorship, and soon bore the burden of total war.

The Nazi authorities embarked upon a vast propaganda programme intended to indoctrinate the public with their ideology.

The National Socialist German Workers’ Party (Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei, NSDAP) set about systematically managing every aspect of society, forming numerous socio-professional associations, cultural societies and gender and age-specific organisations.

In practical terms, this meant that the Nazis controlled and monitored everything and everybody, even the

most apparently trivial aspects of everyday life. That included people’s reading habits, and libraries were rapidly subsumed into the indoctrination effort.

Alsace thus experienced a period of rapid, forced Nazification, albeit with the help of some local residents, along with Germans who had been forced out of Alsace in 1918, civil servants from Baden and members of the NSDAP. Starting in July 1940, the names of all streets, public places and shops were Germanised. On 16 August, German was declared to be the only official language of Alsace. It was henceforth forbidden to speak French, and even to read books in French.

Private libraries were purged: newspapers, journals and books in French were collected and destroyed (in propaganda ceremonies which culminated in the burning of banned books).

The press was placed under party control and forced to contribute to the propaganda campaign. Civil servants in Alsace were obliged to undergo ideological “re-education”. The entire culture sector was put to work promoting Nazi ideology. By 1941, 700 popular libraries and 1,200 school libraries were established or in the works. By March 1942, 2,061 libraries had been established in the region’s villages and small towns, housing over 557,000 books. Between 1941 and 1943, 1.4 million books were distributed to the libraries of Alsace.



7. on plan

Poster: Hinaus mit dem welschen Plunder

(Get that Froggie junk out of here!),
Strasbourg, Straßburger Neueste Nachrichten printworks 1940
National University Library of Strasbourg, M.AFFICHE.390,B

This propaganda poster illustrates the policy of forced Germanisation imposed by the Nazi authorities. It shows symbols of France and its culture being thrown in the bin, including a cockerel wearing a beret, as well as Marianne, the embodiment of the Republic and its values. Books are also in the firing line, with the banished tomes including works by Alsatian cartoonist Hansi, as well as René Bazin's novel Les Oberlé, decried as a Francophile's perspective on Alsace.



8. on plan

Poster: Elsässer und Elsässerinnen

Dominican Library, Colmar, Z EST 915 (don Bopp)

After the annexation, the occupiers forced the people of Alsace to speak only German. Anybody caught speaking French could be punished on the spot.



9. on plan

Poster: Werdet Leser der Volksbücherei

Dominican Library, Colmar, Z EST 1137

The Nazis understood the importance of public libraries to their campaign of "Nazification". Drawing a parallel between the book and the sword positions reading as another weapon which can help the Nazi forces to achieve total victory. Special focus was placed upon public lending libraries (Volksbüchereien), which were endowed with generous budgets in order to serve as tools of mass indoctrination, or "Nazification".



10. on plan

Poster: Buch und Schwert

Dominican Library, Colmar, Z EST 915
Photograph: Colmar, municipal library



11. on plan

Bookshelves:

Selection of works from the Nazi library in Sélestat.

Sélestat Humanist Library

These shelves contain a selection of the books made available to readers in Sélestat at the popular library (Volksbücherei) founded by the occupying authorities. Works of Nazi propaganda sit side-by-side with classics of German literature. The Nazi volumes can be easily identified by the distinctive bindings and fonts they use, which make them stand out on the shelves.

Display case No.3:

Julius STREICHER, *Der Giftpilz* (The poisonous mushroom),

Nuremberg, Verlag 'der Stürmer', 1938

Alsace-Moselle Memorial, inv. 019.3.2

This book is entirely representative of the sort of literature the Nazis distributed in order to indoctrinate young people with Hitler's propaganda priorities, including his rabid antisemitism. This volume contains illustrations by Philipp Rupprecht, spread across 15 chapters detailing the Nazi metaphor for Jews as a poisonous mushroom spreading through contemporary society. The author of this book, Julius Streicher (1885-1946), was a high-ranking Nazi and editor of antisemitic tabloid *Der Stürmer*. He was one of the war criminals tried by the international military tribunal at Nuremberg, where he was sentenced to death by hanging.

Set of magazines and propaganda pamphlets illustrating Nazi efforts to indoctrinate young people:

- *Das Deutsche Mädel* (German girl), August 1940
(Alsace-Moselle Memorial, inv. 022.25.1)
- *Der Pimpf* (Young boy), September 1940
(Alsace-Moselle Memorial, inv. 022.25.2)
- *Deutsche Jugendburg* (Germany's youth fortress), January and February 1938 (Alsace-Moselle Memorial, inv. 022.25.3 (1 et 2))
- *Hilf mit!* (Get involved!), July 1938
(Alsace-Moselle Memorial, inv. 022.25.4)

These publications are testament to the mass indoctrination attempted by the Nazi propaganda machine, imposing total control over all areas of society and tailoring its messaging to different groups. The magazine *Der Pimpf* was aimed specifically at young boys who were signed up to the Hitler Youth.

***Lesebuch für die Volksschulen im Elsass 1940*: 5. bis. 8. Schuljahr (Learn-to-read manual distributed to schools in Alsace in 1940: Years 5 to 8), Lahr, Moritz Schauenburg, 1940.**

Sélestat Humanist Library, M 78 LES

This reading book for learners illustrates the Nazi policy of ideologically indoctrinating children from an early age, in the school environment. For the propagandists, learning to read was the ideal opportunity to inculcate young minds with the ideas they were trying to spread throughout society.

Adolf HITLER, *Mein Kampf*, Munich, Zentralverlag der NSDAP, 1939.

Sélestat Humanist Library, Dc³ 325

This book constitutes the cornerstone of Nazi ideology. Hitler wrote it while in prison in Landsberg between 11 November 1923 and 20 December 1924, following the failure of the Beer Hall Putsch in Munich on 8 November 1923. *Mein Kampf* (My Struggle) contains autobiographical passages while also describing the early days of the National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP). In a style dripping with hatred, Hitler describes the world as seen through the prism of Nazi ideology, coloured by nationalism and virulent antisemitism. The Nazi regime gave this book as a wedding present to all newlywed couples from April 1936 onwards, and by 1945 almost 12 million copies had been printed.

Display case No. 4:

BOUHLER (Philipp), *Kampf um Deutschland: Ein Lesebuch für die deutsche Jugend* (Struggle for Germany: a reading book for German youth, Berlin, Zentralverlag der NSDAP, 1939.

Sélestat Humanist Library, Bn 869

Philipp Bouhler (1899-1945) was a politician and senior Nazi party dignitary, who served as Chief of the Chancellery of the Führer. Hitler also appointed him to oversee the Aktion T4 programme, the mass extermination of mentally and physically disabled people. In this book aimed at young readers, Bouhler evokes the early days of the Nazi movement. This copy belongs to the Nazi library in Sélestat, founded to Nazify the reading materials available to the people of the town, as witnessed by the stamp visible on the title page 'Städt[ische] Volksbücherei Schlettstadt'.

Hitler in seinen Bergen : 86 Bilddokumente aus der Umgebung des Führers, Berlin W 35 : Zeitgeschichte-Verlag, [1938].

Sélestat Humanist Library, Bn 713

Jugend um Hitler:120 Bilddokumente aus der Umgebung des Führers, Berlin W 35 : Zeitgeschichte-Verlag, [s.d.].

Sélestat Humanist Library, Bn 771

These two works are taken from the Nazi library in Sélestat, and are examples of the richly illustrated propaganda materials disseminated by the Third Reich, designed to present an almost jovial image of the Führer. Photographs show Hitler amidst Alpine landscapes, or surrounded by young Germans.

12. on plan

The Instrumentalisation of Written Heritage

Even in the party's early days, the Nazis had rapidly understood the potential benefits of manipulating and utilising history, presenting a narrative which celebrated the "eternal Germany".

Heritage, in the broadest sense of the term, was thus instrumentalised in the name of "Nazification".

The newly created Gau of Alsace-Baden hosted numerous exhibitions intended to contribute to this ideological campaign, some of which travelled throughout the region, including one show celebrating "2,000 Years of Fighting along the Rhine". Propaganda actions of this kind sought to minimise the importance of Alsatian culture, subsuming the fate of the

region into a broader territory known as the Upper Rhine or Oberrhein. In Sélestat, exhibitions of precious works from the permanent collections, a practice which had existed since the 19th century, were instrumentalised by the occupiers to proclaim the town's loyalty to the Reich, in preparation for the Kreistag (a summit bringing together senior Nazi party officials from the region) held here in 1942. The librarian at the time, Abbé Joseph Walter, put together an exhibition of some of the library's historic volumes, showcasing the ancient and humanist literary heritage which the Nazis had worked hard to appropriate.



13. on plan

Poster: 2 000 Jahre Kampf am Rhein

Dominican Library, Colmar, Z EST 1.045

Poster advertising the Colmar leg of the travelling exhibition '2,000 Years of Fighting on the Rhine', which first ran in Strasbourg from 19 June to 15 August 1942.



14. on plan

Poster: Kreistag der Nationalsozialistischen deutschen Arbeiterpartei, Schlettstadt 27 september 1942 (Meeting of the regional section of the National Socialist German Workers' Party, Sélestat 27 September 1942).

National University Library, Strasbourg, M.AFFICHE.656 NBI 1

This poster commemorates the annual gathering organised by the regional section of the Nazi party each autumn. Prominently featured is the symbol representing the Opferring (or 'circle of sacrifice'), gateway to the Nazi party for those keen to become members.

Display case No. 5:

Kreistag der Nationalsozialistischen deutschen Arbeiterpartei: Schlettstadt, 27. September 1942, [s.l.], 1942.

National University Library, Strasbourg, M.127.354

The programme published to coincide with the Kreistag (regional meeting) mentions the inauguration of the exhibition 'Zeugen Deutscher Reichsherrlichkeit in Schlettstadt' ('Witnesses of German Loyalty to the Reich in Sélestat'), to be held at the municipal library on Friday 25 September 1942.

On the wall Kreistag Schlettstadt 1942. Ausstellung in der Stadtbibliothek 'Zeugen Deutscher Reichsherrlichkeit in Schlettstadt'.

Archives of the Sélestat Humanist Library

To mark the annual meeting (or Kreistag), held on 27 September 1942, of the Nazi authorities responsible for controlling the population of the Alsace region, chief librarian Abbé J. Walter put together an exhibition entitled 'Witnesses of German Loyalty to the Reich in Sélestat'. The programme describes the documents and artefacts assembled for this show. They include, among other things, the bust of the Unknown Lady from the church of Sainte-Foy, Wimpheling's edition of the *Germania* and the edition of Velleius Paterculus' *Roman History* published by Beatus Rhenanus, thus illustrating the extent to which the collections of the Humanist Library were appropriated by the Nazi propaganda machine, in order to celebrate the Germanic identity of the town of Sélestat.

***Das Elsass.-Herzland und Schildmauer des Reiches. 2000 Jahre Deutscher Kampf am Oberrhein*, Strasbourg, Ed. Neueste Nachrichten, [1942].**

Dominican Library, Colmar, A.155

This publication is effectively the catalogue of the exhibition '2,000 Years of Fighting on the Rhine', which ran in Strasbourg from 19 June to 15 August 1942. This event illustrates the extent to which the Nazis sought to appropriate the history of the region, and even its archaeology. The exhibition was inaugurated by Gauleiter Wagner in person, marking the second anniversary of the Nazi flag being raised over Strasbourg cathedral. This show appropriated archaeology as a propaganda tool, depicting heritage conservation as a sacred duty. The underlying message which runs throughout this publication is that Alsace indisputably belonged to the Germanic world.

Display case No. 6:

Ruhmesblätter deutscher Geschichte, sticker album [c. 1930-1945].

Alsace-Moselle Memorial, inv. 019.3.2

This album was designed to hold collectible stickers illustrating key exploits and episodes from the history of the “eternal Germany” celebrated in Nazi propaganda. This particular page focuses on the battle which took place in September of the year 9 AD in the Teutoburg Forest, in modern-day Lower Saxony or North Rhine-Westphalia. This battle pitted three Roman legions under the command of Varus, governor of Germania, against a coalition of Germanic tribes aided by the treachery of Arminius (better known as Herrmann in German), one of Varus’ auxiliary commanders and a Cheruscan prince who had been educated at Rome, where he had gained citizenship and undergone training in Roman military techniques.

Velleius Paterculus, Historiae romanae duo volumina,

Basel, Johannes Froben, 1520.

Sélestat Humanist Library, K.954a

Provenance: Jacques Spiegel; Capucins de Wasselonne

This volume contains the edition of Velleius Paterculus’ Roman History edited by renowned scholar Beatus Rhenanus. Velleius Paterculus (c.19 BC – c.31 AD) is one of the few ancient authors to mention the Battle of the Teutoburg Forest, a foundational event for German nationalists which featured prominently in Nazi propaganda. This battle resulted in the destruction of three Roman legions, and put a halt to the Empire’s territorial ambitions East of the Rhine.

Tacitus, Germania, Frankfurt, Verlag Moritz Diesterweg, 1940.

Alsace-Moselle Memorial, inv. 020.52.29 (1 and 2)

This edition of the *Germania*, by Roman historian and statesman Tacitus (58 – c. 120 AD), accompanied by a volume of commentary, illustrates the renewed interest in this work among Latin scholars working in the Nazi period. In this short treatise written in around 98 AD, originally titled *On the Origin and Situation of the Germans*, Tacitus describes the Germanic tribes living beyond the borders of the Roman Empire. He presents an ambiguous portrait of these peoples, using their cruelty and savagery to formulate implicit criticisms of Roman luxury and indolence.

Tacitus, *Commentaria Germaniae in P. Cornelii Taciti Equitis Rom. Libellum de situ, moribus et populis Germanorum...*, Nuremberg, Johannes Petreius, 1536.

Provenance: Beatus Rhenanus (« Sum Beati Rhenani An. MDXXXVI »)

Sélestat Humanist Library, K.990a

This volume is taken from the library of Beatus Rhenanus, and contains the text of Tacitus' *Germania*. Its presence here is testament to the value Nazi propagandists placed on the written heritage of Sélestat's humanist tradition. In reality, this treatise had long been part of the literary corpus adopted by early German nationalists, well before Rhenanus' day. The late medieval period was profoundly shaped by the struggle between Rome and the Holy Roman Empire, and Tacitus' work was viewed as conveying a positive image of the Germans, contrasting favourably with the vices of Rome and the papal court.

Display case No. 7:

Letter from the Director of Strasbourg's municipal archives, Abbé J. Braeuner, requesting a copy of the bust of Jean Mentel sculpted by C. Sichler-Vallastre, and the response of Abbé J. Walter; list of loans requested from the Sélestat municipal library

Archives of the City and Eurometropolis of Strasbourg, AVES 7MW978

During the period of Nazi rule, Strasbourg's museum community was shaken up by plans to establish a new institution devoted to Johannes Gutenberg – who is believed to have developed his first movable type printing press in the city sometime between 1434 and 1444 – and to subsequent developments in printing technology down to the present day. The City of Strasbourg even set about acquiring fragments of the famous 42-line Bible printed by Gutenberg at Mainz, and these pages can still be found in the collections of what is now the Médiathèque André Malraux. The documents shown here illustrate the involvement of the Humanist Library in this project overseen by the Nazi authorities, who sought once again to establish Strasbourg's position in Germanic history and culture.

15. on plan

A Librarian in the Eye of the Storm: Abbé Joseph Walter

After graduating with degrees in Theology and History of Art, Abbé Joseph Walter took over the post of librarian from Abbé Joseph Clauss in February 1919, as Alsace-Moselle returned to French rule. Soon after taking up the job, he began to publish inventories of the municipal library's collections. Rapidly establishing himself as a key figure in the cultural life of the town, Walter served first as vice-president (1919-1938) and later as president (1938) of the Sélestat society for literature, science and the arts, the foremost institution for the dissemination of French culture in Sélestat in the interwar years.

Capitalising on the efforts made in this direction by the French national government, Abbé Walter threw himself into the task of protecting the collections of the Humanist Library, personally overseeing their evacuation and storage at the Château de Hautefort in Dordogne. Relieved of his duties in the summer of 1940, on account of his evident Francophilia, Walter complained to the Nazi authorities and contested his dismissal, taking the matter all the way to Gauleiter Wagner. In reality no replacement librarian was ever appointed, and Walter was able to remain in post until the Liberation. He adapted to the constraints imposed by the Nazi authorities and, in spite of the various obstacles placed in his path, continued his work conserving the collections of the municipal library of Sélestat, which thus survived those dark years virtually unscathed.

16. on plan (on the desk)

Deutsches Reich - Personal Ausweis für Elsässer

Archives of the Humanist Library of Sélestat

This document was effectively Abbé Joseph Walter's identity card. It was valid from 30 April 1941 to 30 September 1942.

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the online version

