

# German Books in South Australia's Institute libraries

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The South Australian Institute was formed in June 1856 and in October that same year there appeared in the *Register* a request that the large number of Germans residing in and about Adelaide, as South Australians and fellow-colonists, be supplied with German books and newspapers within the new Institute's library and reading room.<sup>1</sup> The idea was discussed at the next annual meeting and it was agreed that librarian Nathaniel Hailes would arrange for a list to be compiled of 'the best standard authors of Germany in the original language'.<sup>2</sup> Hailes called on the services of Rudolf Reimer, a businessman and newspaper proprietor of Tanunda, who compiled an extensive list of German texts. A selection from this list was then made by chemist and numismatist, Henry Heuzenroeder of Rundle Street, and the selected books were approved for order.<sup>3</sup>



Figure 1 – The South Australian Institute Building, North Terrace, Adelaide, c1872, (photographer Samuel White Sweet) (Image courtesy of the State Library of South Australia: SLSA: B 7877)

In their Annual Report of 1859 the Board of the South Australian Institute declared that they 'thought it desirable to make German literature a prominent feature in the library' and hoped that the 230 volumes recently arrived from Berlin would increase the number of German speaking subscribers.<sup>4</sup> By the time the new Institute building opened on the corner of North Terrace and Kintore Avenue in 1861, the

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1 *South Australian Register*, 6 October 1856, p.3.

2 *South Australian Register*, 6 October 1857, p.3.

3 Talbot, M.R. (1995) 'Multicultural library services in South Australia prior to World War One', *Australian Library Journal*, November, p.200.

4 *South Australian Register*, 15 October 1859, p.3.

German collection had increased to 266 volumes. This constituted 3.6% of the South Australian Institute's collection. There were 53 different authors, with the most common being; Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Wilhelm Hauff, E.T.A. Hoffmann, Adam Oehlenschläger, Johann Gottfried Seume, Johann Ludwig Tieck and Christoph Martin Wieland. The majority of the collection was fiction, travel and history but they were classics of their genre.<sup>5</sup>

Renewed discussion of German language literature came just months after the commencement of the 'Circulating Book Box' scheme. The scheme had been conceived for South Australia in 1856 but through a series of delays did not eventuate until 1859, just months before a Victorian scheme began in 1860. New South Wales and the United States of America began similar services in the 1880s.<sup>6</sup> This scheme allowed boxes of books to circulate amongst suburban and country institutes to provide additional stock and add interest to their collections.

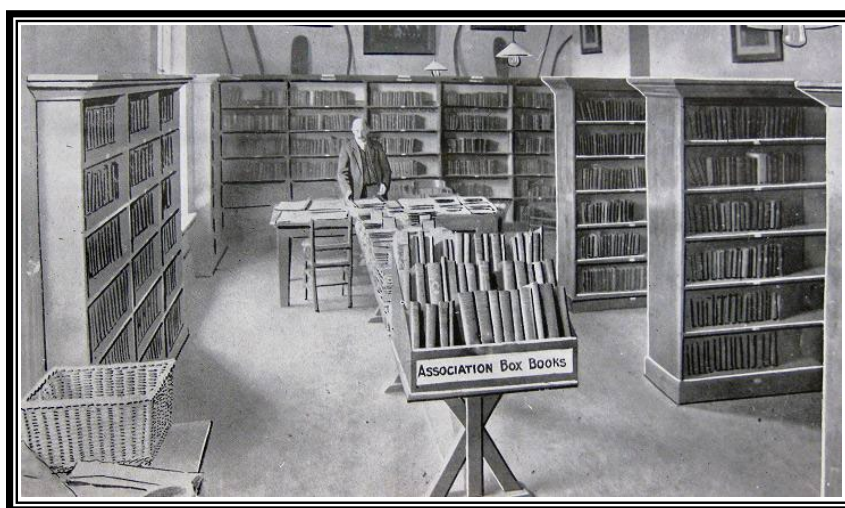


Figure 2 – The library of the Jamestown Institute with a circulating book box in the foreground,<sup>7</sup> (courtesy the State Library of South Australia)

Institutes with a large proportion of German speaking subscribers contacted the Board of the South Australian Institute requesting that German books be included in the circulating boxes. The Board instead decided to send out small parcels of books from the German literature collection to whoever specifically requested them. The Institute at Macclesfield received a selection of 22 volumes in August 1860. The Mt Torrens Institute requested German language books in 1865, Burra Institute in 1866 and Hahndorf Institute in 1869.<sup>8</sup> The demand for German language books increased. In 1873 the *Register* reported that;

5 Talbot, M.R., (1992), *A chance to read: a history of the institutes movement in South Australia*, Libraries Board of South Australia, Adelaide, p.59; South Australian Institute, *Catalogue of the books in the library of the South Australian Institute*, Adelaide, Government Printer, 1861.

6 Bridge, C., (1986), *A trunk full of books: history of the State Library of South Australia and its forerunners*, Wakefield Press, Adelaide, p.39; Adams, J.R.G., (1898) 'The Circulating Book Boxes amongst country institutes in South Australia', *Proceedings of the Sydney Meeting*, Library Association of Australasia, October, pp.38-44.

7 *South Australian Institutes Journal*, April 1927.

8 Talbot, M.R., (1992), *op.cit.*, p.60.

*A request has been made that book boxes containing German books may be provided for Institutes whose subscribers are chiefly Germans. The Board consider this a valuable suggestion, and will endeavour to carry it out.*<sup>9</sup>

In 1873 all Institutes were asked if they would borrow German book boxes. Out of the 39 replies, 11 Institutes responded that they would, and Freeling, Greenock, Lyndoch and Tanunda expressed a high need for German literature.<sup>10</sup> The books were ordered through M.P.F Basedow, the Tanunda educator, newspaper proprietor and politician, and thirteen German boxes were ready for circulation in 1875.<sup>11</sup>

<b>Year</b>	<b>English</b>	<b>German</b>
1876	85	13
1877	90	13
1878	99	13
1879	101	13
1880	111	15
1881	125	19
1882	132	21
1883	133	23
1884	134	23

*Table 1 – Numbers of Boxes circulating between 1876 & 1884*

The thirteen German boxes circulated until 1879 by which time they had been sent to each of the institutes which took them. An order for fresh books replenished the stock by 225 volumes and increased the boxes to nineteen.<sup>12</sup>

The demand for German books continued to increase and in 1881 another 400 volumes were ordered from Europe.<sup>13</sup> The German boxes increased to 23 by 1884, which represented almost 15% of the number of boxes in circulation.<sup>14</sup>

The circulating book boxes assisted with a common problem of small isolated country institutes when library subscribers had ‘read-out’ the local collection.<sup>15</sup> Institutes which had a high percentage of German speaking subscribers did maintain German language books within their own library, purchased through a combination of subscription and government grants. There is a great deal of evidence for institutes which catered for readers of both English and German. In 1862 the committee of the Greenock Institute authorised the purchase of books to the value of £40. As there were “more German than English speaking subscribers, emphasis was placed on supplying books in both languages”. The Institute also subscribed to newspapers and magazines in both German and English.<sup>16</sup>

9 *South Australian Register*, 6 November 1873, p.6S.

10 Talbot, M.R., (1992), *op.cit.*, p.60.

11 Talbot, M.R., (1995), *op.cit.*, p.202.

12 *South Australian Register*, 16 October 1876, p.6; *South Australian Register*, 15 October 1877, p.1S; *South Australian Register*, 15 October 1878, p.1S; *South Australian Register*, 14 October 1879, p.6.

13 *South Australian Register*, 18 October 1880, p 1S; *South Australian Register*, 15 October 1881, p.2S.

14 *South Australian Register*, 14 October 1882, p 5S; *South Australian Register*, 15 October 1883, p.2S.

15 Talbot, M.R., (1992), *op.cit.*, p.53.

16 Saegenschnitter, Geoffrey B., (1983), *Greenock Institute Centenary 1883-1983*, Greenock, South Australia, pp.2-4.

When the Hahndorf Institute was revived in 1893, it received a supply of German language books through a donation from the Mount Barker Institute which consisted of, 'the whole of the German works now in our library consisting of 73 volumes of popular writers'.<sup>17</sup>

The next year a letter was received from R. Barr-Smith of Mount Barker who, in April 1893, had laid the foundation stone of the Hahndorf Institute building. The letter is worth including in full:

*Mt Barker, 10 May 1894*

*Dear Mr Von Doussa,*

*Some time ago you spoke to me about sending to the Hahndorf Institute any books or magazines which I had done with.*

*I would gladly do so, but somehow I have not seen my way to do anything effective in this direction. Take the case of magazines. I like sometimes to tear an article out for future reference and this spoils it for others.*

*However, I have thought I may help you to begin a useful 'library' by sending you a cheque for £100 which I enclose herein.*

*If I may offer a suggestion, it is - that part of this money may be used in the purchase of German books.*

*I know you are all South Australian of naturalisation, none the less are you Germans by descent, and though many of those who came from Germany have passed away, the taste and language of those who remain amongst us are not to be neglected. Nor can I imagine that anyone of German descent tho [sic] born in South Australia would willingly be wholly ignorant of the best literature and the history of the great Fatherland.*

*Yours truly,*

*R. Barr Smith*<sup>18</sup>

The committee resolved to spend £30 on German books and formed a German Books Committee to make the selection. It was also decided that £30 would be spent on English language books from the stock of Wigg & Sons. The German books were selected and ordered through M.P.F. Basedow & Co. and had arrived by July 1894.<sup>19</sup>

The Gawler Institute is another which maintained a German language collection. In 1894 "Class L – German Literature" represented around 8% of the collection with 632 items which included, "valuable works by some of the most eminent authors".<sup>20</sup> The bilingual nature of many South Australian institutes was recognised abroad. Under the heading "South Australia and India" the *Register* reprinted a section of an article from an Indian newspaper which contained this reference;

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17 Mount Barker Institute to the Secretary of the Hahndorf Institute, Minutes of the Hahndorf Institute, State Records of South Australia, GRG58/75/00001.

18 Minutes of the Hahndorf Institute, State Records of South Australia, GRG58/75/00001.

19 Minutes of the Hahndorf Institute, State Records of South Australia, GRG58/75/00001.

20 Gawler Institute Catalogue of the Library & Reading Room (1894) Gawler, p.66; *South Australia Institutes Journal*, (1901), Vol. II, No. 12, July 24, p. 242.

The thirst for knowledge is a pleasing feature of South Australia. Every township of a few hundred inhabitants has its 'Institute', where all the English and many of the best German papers and periodicals are to be found in the reading-room, and a good library is available at a very reasonable subscription.<sup>21</sup>

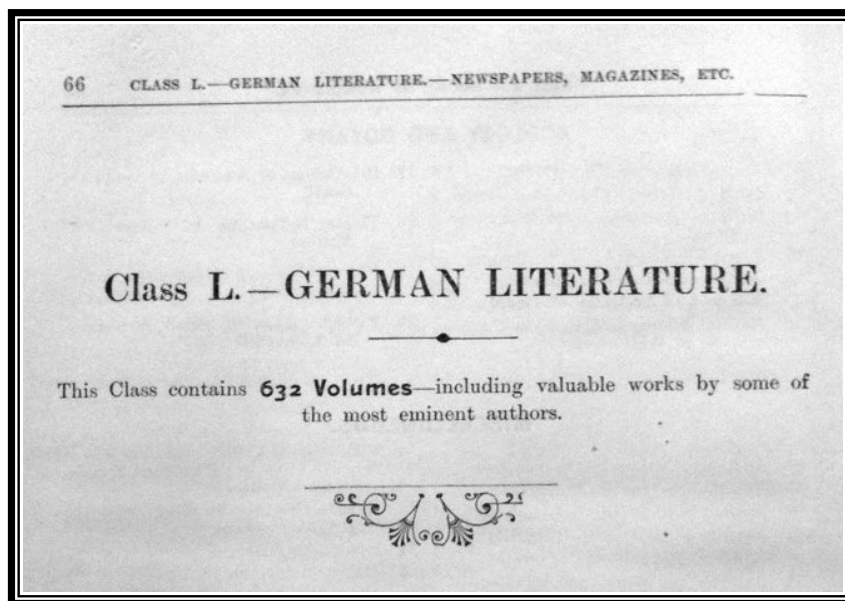


Figure 3 – from the *Catalogue of the Gawler Town Library and Reading Room, 1894*,<sup>22</sup> (courtesy State Library of South Australia)

Year	English	German
1899	172	25
1900	176	21
1901	178	17
1902	180	17
1903	182	14
1903	182	14
1905	178	14
1906	182	9
1907	185	9
1908	188	7
1909	196	4

Table 2 – Numbers of Boxes circulating between 1899 & 1909

In 1893 the committee of the Public Library, Museum & Art Gallery approved the purchase of additional German books for the circulating book boxes.<sup>23</sup> From the introduction of the service in 1875 to the 1890s, the German boxes had fluctuated between approximately 13% and 17.5% of the English language boxes in circulation.<sup>24</sup>

In 1900 the number of German language book boxes dropped for the first time. At the 1900 Annual Meeting the committee decided that no additional German books would be bought that year, and instead the Librarian should apply the allocated £75 to the purchase of general literature.<sup>25</sup>

21 South Australian Register, 18 July 1892, p.5.

22 *Gawler Institute Catalogue of the Library & Reading Room, 1894.*

23 South Australian Register, 26 July 1893, p.3.

24 *South Australian Register*, 11 October 1894, p 6; *Advertiser*, 20 November 1899, p 3; Talbot, M.R., (1992), *op.cit.*, p.59.

25 *South Australian Register*, 21 July 1900, p 11

In 1901 the Librarian withdrew 600 German language volumes from the boxes and distributed them as gifts amongst the institutes which received German book boxes. More books were withdrawn in 1903 and it was announced that;

*It has been decided to issue no more German books after those in circulation have gone the rounds. By this means one-sixth of the total grant will be saved for the benefit of purely English readers. It is considered that the German colonists have been long enough in South Australia to thoroughly master the English language, and that every facility for learning it is open to the children.*<sup>26</sup>

A protest from the *Australische Zeitung* was republished in the *Advertiser*;

*This resolution however, is either an attempt to suppress the German element, or a lamentable want of the due recognition of the importance of a knowledge of foreign languages ... Does not the German taxpayer contribute as much to the library as any other; and why should he be compelled to contribute if it is exclusively for the benefit of the English reading public? ... To the student, and especially, to the English student, a knowledge of foreign languages is of incalculable value, and particularly a knowledge of German. In all spheres of science, be it medicine, chemistry, or engineering, in the study of literature, as well as music, the student, in order to attain to a true and thorough knowledge, has to turn to German textbooks, and without a knowledge of the language he cannot utilise the rich stores contained therein. The University of Adelaide, duly recognising this fact, is collecting a valuable German library for the use of its students.*<sup>27</sup>

Books withdrawn from the German book boxes were sent to institutes with German speaking subscribers; particularly to those institutes which protested. A letter was received from the president of the Wilmington Institute 'expressing his committee's regret that the supply of German books for the circulating boxes had been discontinued'. Wilmington was sent 50 volumes of German books as a donation.<sup>28</sup> Greenock, Angaston and Nuriootpa received 100 volumes and the Sutherland Institute received 10 volumes.<sup>29</sup>

Institutes continued to maintain their own German language collection, in particular those with German speaking subscribers. The total number of books in the Hahndorf Institute library in 1909 was 750, with 405 being in the English language and 345 in German.<sup>30</sup> In 1913 the Tanunda Institute reported their circulation numbers to be, "English books, 810; from circulating boxes 152; German books, 275".<sup>31</sup> The Wilmington Institute had a catalogue of 132 German language books in 1910.<sup>32</sup>

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26 *South Australian Register*, 12 January 1903, p.6.

27 *The Advertiser*, 30 January 1903, p.4.

28 *The Advertiser*, 19 March 1904, p.10; *South Australian Institutes Journal*, (1904), Vol. V, No. 4, 24 November, p.74.

29 *South Australian Institutes Journal*, (1905), Vol. V, No. 6, Jan 24, p.119; *South Australian Institutes Journal*, (1903), Vol. III, No. 7, 24 February, p.136; *Advertiser*, 23 September 1907, p.8; *Advertiser*, 11 January 1907, p.9.

30 *South Australian Institutes Journal*, (1905) Vol IX, No 7, 24 February, p.130.

31 *Advertiser*, 10 January 1914, p.21.

32 *Wilmington Catalogue - German Collection*, State Records of South Australia, GRG58/240/00001.

The circulating book box scheme was a useful service, especially to South Australia's rural population. The inclusion of boxes of exclusively German language books, at a rate of 13% to 17.5% of the English language boxes, demonstrates the strength of South Australia's bilingual community in the nineteenth century. The discontinuation of the German book boxes from the turn of the century was stimulated by a variety of factors. Institute researcher Michael Talbot found the cause to be a combination of budgetary pressure and a growth in national identity.<sup>33</sup> The decade from 1899 saw the rise of the Institutes Association, with their business-like approach to library administration. The expensive German books, imported from Europe to serve the needs of a small minority, could be replaced by many more English language books. The turn of the century also brought the Boer War and Australian Federation which promoted feelings of a national identity based on a British heritage.

Another factor could have been the rise in the preferred use of the English language, particularly amongst the middle class of German descent, and institutes in South Australia traditionally served a middle class clientele. This process was exacerbated by tragic global events in the twentieth century. Yet, despite the anti-German feeling brought about by the First and Second World Wars, German books continued to be maintained in South Australia, not just in Institute libraries, but also within Lutheran communities, , the German Club, the German Association, the Austrian Club, the University of Adelaide, the State Library of South Australian and the network of public libraries which were to eventually replace the institute library system.

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33 Talbot, M.R., (1995), *op.cit.*, pp.204-206.