

**OTTO HARRASSOWITZ**  
**150 YEARS**  
QUALITY SERVICE TO  
SCHOLARSHIP



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# PREFACE

Dear Reader,

It was a “global business” that the young Otto Harrassowitz set out to establish when he began his professional career. That is, at least, what he wrote to his father at the time. But what might initially have seemed to be youthful exuberance did, in fact, become a reality just shortly after the company was founded. Today, 150 years later, the company is in the hands of his successors and is renowned in the world of academia and among libraries as an international academic bookseller and subscription agency for scholarly journals as well as a publishing house.

The past 150 years of our company’s history fill us with pride in what we have achieved and are both an incentive for and a commitment to the future. Our history has not always been an easy one. Each historical event has brought its own challenges. Looking back, we see that we owe the company’s success primarily to our university customers, with whom we have always enjoyed collaborative relationships. However, we equally owe our success to our employees, who have shown great dedication and loyalty to the company, sometimes under adverse circumstances, and who continue to write the company’s history every day. Thank you! We will continue to be a reliable and innovative partner in the future and deliver the highest level of quality service to scholarship.

A history of 150 years is impressive for a company, and it is therefore important for us to put it to paper for posterity.

Throughout the course of this project, we have succeeded in collecting many exciting historical documents from a wide variety of sources, as well as personal experiences through interviews. This text is the result, enriched with information and selected illustrations. Compiling and writing the company’s history over the past few months not only has been a work in progress for us but also has been fascinating by revealing the links between contemporary experiences and the company’s history. In the process,

we repeatedly came across events and content that, to our surprise, are still astonishingly relevant today, even after 150 years.

We hope you will now join us on the enthralling and entertaining journey through time over the past 150 years of our company's history.

Ruth Becker-Scheicher  
Dr. Nadja Dorn-Lange  
Sebastian Weigel



## EARLY AND APPRENTICESHIP YEARS

The small publication *Otto Harrassowitz und seine Firma – Eine Skizze (Otto Harrassowitz and His Company – a Vignette)* was published on July 1, 1922. This work was written and published by Hans Harrassowitz, the son of the company founder, on the occasion of the company's 50th anniversary. His father had been dead for two years by then, as well as not having been able to actively run the business since 1914 due to a long illness. This detailed manuscript allows us to trace the future company founder's apprenticeship period and the first fifty years of the company.

Otto Harrassowitz was born in the Venezuelan port city of La Guaira on December 18, 1845. His father owned plantations and a copper mine there and shipped his goods to Hamburg. As there was no German school there at the time, Otto was sent to Germany on his own at the age of ten to receive a "thorough German education," as the publication refers to it. In Berlin, he lived at the home of his uncle, the city court president Gustav Harrassowitz, and attended a classical grammar school.

In 1862, Otto, who was now 17 years old, wrote a letter to his father: "At your request, my uncle talked to me yesterday about my choice of profession." According to the family's wishes, he was not to become a merchant and trader like his father. However, the young man was not very enthusiastic about being urged to study law and then become a civil servant. He preferred books and ancient languages. A year later, he made his decision: he wanted to become a bookseller like his uncle, Bernhard Westermann, the brother of publisher Georg Westermann. Bernhard had founded a branch in New York for Westermann Verlag, before then setting up his own bookstore there specializing in German literature and journals for German-speaking emigrants in 1851. He wrote a letter of recommendation for his nephew to Hermann Rost, the owner of Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung in Leipzig. And so, in January 1864, Otto set off for what was then the center of the German book trade. Rost recommended that he train as an antiquarian bookseller because there were good opportunities for a career in this specialized field.



## **APPRENTICESHIP AT K. F. KOEHLER**

Otto Harrassowitz had already been offered an apprenticeship at his second job interview. K. F. Koehler, at that time one of the most respected academic antiquarian booksellers, agreed to employ him as an apprentice for three years beginning October 1, 1864. Because he was not yet of age, his father negotiated the terms with “the master.”

These were formative years for the young man. His master, Karl Franz Koehler (1843–1897), affectionately known as “Papa” in the store, was a benevolent instructor. His dealings with Adolph Ulm (1824–1884), the head of Koehler’s Antiquarian Bookstore, who had established Germany’s first academic antiquarian bookstore at Koehler, were somewhat stricter and also more strenuous.

The work of an apprentice antiquarian bookseller was not always very exciting. There was not much talking, but Otto obviously did a good job, as we can see from a surviving appraisal. It praises the young man, stating that “[it] testifies to the purposeful ambition and seriousness with which he did his job that Harrassowitz, from the very first day of his apprenticeship, knew how to find interest in even the most tedious manual tasks, of which the book trade has an abundance.” The young man took it sportingly when he had to copy out book titles for weeks at a time, standing at his desk from morning until night. On other days, he scrambled among the dusty shelves in a poorly lit vault that required heating even in midsummer. None of this could spoil his enjoyment of his chosen profession.

After obtaining his final qualification as an antiquarian bookseller, Otto remained at K. F. Koehler for another three years as an assistant; he was far from having learned everything there was to know. He “learned by doing,” because there were no textbooks for this still fairly new branch of the book trade. Not much changed for him in the beginning, except that he was now called by his family name rather than by his first name. His employers were satisfied with his performance. He had a very good memory and picked up new things quickly. He also had another important quality that accompanied him throughout his life, one which he often summed up with the phrase “interest is everything.”

## **EXPERIENCE ABROAD**

To his great regret, Otto was unable to fulfill his wish to go to England after his apprenticeship and his time as an assistant. The English antiquarian book trade was a world leader during those years, but the English



Otto Harrassowitz in the founding year of his company, 1872.

companies did not hire German assistants, and the few local German companies were in such demand that he would have had to finance an internship at one of these out of his own pocket. But his father's business was not doing as well anymore. He had lost his fortune due to political upheaval in Venezuela and could therefore no longer support his son. Otto found another solution: he accepted a position with Frederik Muller & Co in Amsterdam in 1870. This, as it later turned out, was a good choice, because his training as an antiquarian bookseller received the perfect finishing touch with Frederik Muller (1817–1881). Muller recognized a like-minded person in the young man, and over time the working relationship even developed into a friendship. Otto could have stayed in this comfortable position in Amsterdam for his entire life, but when the opportunity to strike out on his own presented itself, he boldly took it.



German bookstore building in Leipzig around 1900.

## LEIPZIG, THE CITY AT THE HEART OF THE BOOK TRADE

At the turn of the 19th to the 20th century, Leipzig was the most important location for German publishers and booksellers. Almost all German books were distributed through the Leipzig trading center. In the Graphisches Viertel part of the city, east of the city center, most companies were concentrated around the book trade: publishers, bookstores, antiquarian bookstores, music stores, type foundries, printers, and bookbinders. Booksellers and publishers had already signed binding stock exchange regulations in 1825, and thus founded the Börsenverein der Deutschen Buchhändler zu Leipzig (Leipzig German Publishers & Booksellers Association), the most important interest group, which still exists today. The German Börsenverein has resided in a prestigious building on Ritterstrasse since 1836. Among the issues it dealt with were prohibiting the discounting of books, the fight against pirate copies, and the establishment of fixed retail prices for books, which they were able to enforce in 1888. The members of the German Publishers & Booksellers Association were also involved in shaping copyright law in Germany. In Leipzig, the distances





A typical 19th century Leipzig market hand is shown in an anonymous etching from 1835. These mostly semiskilled male assistants, who could read and write and occasionally took on more demanding work, played a role at Harrassowitz until the 1930s. In particular, the market hand Richard Nöbel had a special relationship of trust with the boss. The efficient networking of the market hands among themselves and their direct access to top management made it possible to rapidly exchange information in the Leipzig book trading center.

between the various publishers, bookstores, and book wholesalers were short and could be covered by foot. Important players in this interaction were the so-called “market hands,” who rushed back and forth between the various warehouses. They not only transported books but also passed on information. Orders for both hot-off-the-press and antiquarian books were usually completed within a day.

In 1874, the opening of the Eilenburg railroad station simplified and accelerated the transport of paper, metal, and machinery to Leipzig and the shipment of books from the Graphisches Viertel to the rest of the world. Around 1913, there were roughly 2,200 book trade business locations in Leipzig, more than 90 percent of them in the Graphisches Viertel. During the Second World War, the publishers based in the city hoped for a long time, and ultimately in vain, to be spared from Allied attacks as a “city of books.” On the night of December 3 to 4, 1943, 400 British bombers flew a major air raid on the city, in which more than 1,800 people lost their lives. The Graphisches Viertel was hit hard. The great conflagrations created a massive firestorm, and the book warehouses of major booksellers and antiquarians burned for weeks in some cases. It is estimated that about 50 million books were reduced to ashes as a result of the attack. After the war, many of the publishing companies moved to the west of the newly divided Germany.



284 A.	<i>Kaufverträge (Kaufverträge)</i>	<i>Ammondingen</i>
1	<p>0. Juli 1872.  a. <u>Georg Richter</u>  b. <u>Peter Harrassowitz</u> ) <i>Beigeboten in Leipzig.</i>  <i>finden sich im Firmen-Verzeichnis vom 3. Juli 1872.</i>  <i>Verzeichnet für die Stadt Leipzig, Nr. 17, fol. 65.</i></p>	<i>ad d. eingetragenen f. d. j. b. eingetragenen f. d. H.</i>
2	<p>15. September 1874. Das unter A. 1. b. genannte Peter Richter  ist eingetragener, die eingetragene vom 8. September 1874  Verzeichnet für die Stadt Leipzig, Nr. 150, fol. 131.</p>	

Extract from the Commercial Register from 1872 and 1874.



Das Grundstück Querstraße Nr. 14 in Leipzig  
in seiner gegenwärtigen Gestalt  
Nach einer Zeichnung von Richard Mersch

Querstrasse 14 in the immediate vicinity of the F. A. Brockhaus premises (1906); in addition to Harrassowitz, the Dürr'sche Buchhandlung und Druckerei was also located here.

## FOUNDING YEARS

Together with Oscar Richter, a friend from his time as an apprentice, who provided the necessary capital, Otto Harrassowitz founded the antiquarian and publishing bookstore Richter & Harrassowitz in Leipzig in 1872. The young company's focus was antiquarian bookselling, but the two young entrepreneurs also wanted to cover all other areas of the book trade. The business started operations on July 1, 1872, on the ground floor of Carlstrasse number 5 in Leipzig. The first store furnishings came from Oscar Richter, who closed his previous bookstore and brought the first 1,000 books from there with him. Otto spent the time until the opening of the store further increasing the stock of books by shopping in London. Otto and Oscar announced the founding of their company in a circular letter. Their *Antiquariatskatalog Nr. 1. (Antiquarian Book Catalog Number 1)* was published just a few weeks later.

Right from the start, it was Otto who took care of building up the scholarly antiquarian bookstore, while Oscar devoted himself to the publishing side of the business.

### THE SCHOLARLY ANTIQUARIAN BOOKSTORE

In 1874, the company moved to more prestigious business premises at Querstrasse 14 in Leipzig, then number 30. By this time, the antiquarian bookstore was active in all scholarly fields. The antiquarian catalogs were initially selection and mixed catalogs, so not yet specialized into specific topics. Initially, the customer base was limited to Germany, but customers from other European countries soon joined. Otto's good connections in the Netherlands led to his first commission business.

Despite this positive start, the company founders soon went their separate ways; their temperaments and interests were simply too different. A loan from Frederik Muller for several thousand guilders enabled Otto to take over and continue the business on his own account; from 1875, he was the sole owner. Otto Koller (1854–1924) began working as his first assistant in the antiquarian bookstore on October 1, 1876. He remained with



LEIPZIG, den 1. October 1875.

*P. P.*

Hierdurch beehre ich mich, Ihnen die ergebene Mittheilung zu machen, dass ich mit dem heutigen Tage meine bisherige Firma:

**Richter & Harrassowitz in Leipzig**

aufgebe und an deren Stelle meinen alleinigen Namen

**Otto Harrassowitz in Leipzig**

treten lasse. Eine geschäftliche Aenderung tritt hierdurch nicht ein, ich bitte daher alle für meine frühere Firma bestimmten Verschreibungen etc. unverändert an mich zu richten und empfehle insbesondere meine antiquarischen Cataloge auch fernerhin Ihrer gef. thätigen Verwendung.

Hochachtungsvoll

**Otto Harrassowitz.**

Otto Harrassowitz zeichnet:

*Otto Harrassowitz*

Ein eigenhändig unterschriebenes Exemplar ist im Archive des Börsenvereins niedergelegt.

On October 1, 1875, the company gets its official name, which it has kept to this day.

Harrassowitz for 48 years, until his death. In the same year, the University Library of Zagreb appointed Harrassowitz as its permanent supplier of German books. It thereby became the company's first major business customer abroad. The real boom in the export business, however, did not begin until 1884, with the founding of the *Centralblatt für Bibliothekswesen*—from 1904, the *Zentralblatt*—published by Harrassowitz. This had implications not only for publishing activities but also for the antiquarian bookstore, which subsequently placed a thematic emphasis on library science.

Otto Harrassowitz, who was by now an established bookseller, realized that he must continue to specialize in order to meet his high quality standards. He wanted to develop his company into an international scholarly antiquarian bookstore and decided to focus on linguistics. In 1890, he sold his existing stock of books for the natural sciences and medicine to a colleague in Leipzig. By purchasing the antiquarian stock from K. F. Koehler four years later, he succeeded in further expanding his specialties and positioning himself as a leading scholarly antiquarian bookstore. His catalogs were increasingly becoming compendia for their respective fields.

#### **ANTIQUARIAN CATALOGS**

The most important advertising medium for the antiquarian department were the catalogs. These were published again and again and were compiled by the company's employees with great care and immense knowledge. Nearly 400 of these antiquarian catalogs had been published by 1920, the year of Otto Harrassowitz's death. These were thematic compilations of books as well as a presentation of collections, such as those that come up for sale when a scholar's household possessions or private library were liquidated. Otto found it particularly satisfying when he could broker and sell such a collection in its entirety, such as the library of the legal historian Konrad Heinrich Maurer, which was shipped to the Harvard Library and distributed among various sublibraries there. It included 9,000 books and was shipped to America in more than 200 boxes.

Otto repeatedly placed advertisements for his catalogs in the *Börsenblatt*, a weekly magazine for the German book trade. The great importance that these compendia had, and still have, for the book trade, collectors, scholars, and librarians is shown by the many copies that have survived to this day, some bound in leather and often with many annotations. Otto used these publications to promote the other divisions of his company as





[1797.] Ich versandte soeben an alle Handlungen, die sich für meine Kataloge verwenden:

**Antiquarischer Katalog 32.  
Auswahl werthvoller, größerer u.  
seltener Werke. 2700 Arn.**

Ich empfehle diesen reichhaltigen Katalog Ihrer gef. besonderen Verwendung, die auch eine lohnende sein wird, da derselbe nur Werke im Preise von mindestens 5 M. enthält, erfolgende Aufträge daher mehr ins Geld laufen, wie bei gewöhnlichen Katalogen. Ich bitte, den elegant ausgestatteten Katalog besonders wohlhabenderen Bücherkäufern, Bibliotheken u. mitzutheilen. Da die Auflage fast erschöpft ist, kann ich nur noch einzelne Expl. nachliefern.

In Kürze erscheint:

**Antiquarischer Katalog 33.  
Naturwissenschaften.**

Enthaltend die Bibliothek des verst. Hrn.  
Dr. Otto Ule,

Herausgebers der „Natur“ u.

Bedarf von letzterem bitte ich gef. zu verlangen.

Leipzig.

**Otto Harrassowitz.**

[29190.] Ein mit guter Gymnasialbildung versehener, intelligenter junger Mann findet im Herbst Aufnahme als Lehrling in meinem Geschäft. Derselbe würde, unter meiner persönlichen Anleitung stehend, Gelegenheit zu einer gediegenen Ausbildung im wissenschaftlichen Antiquariat haben. Alles Nähere besonderer Uebereinkunft vorbehalten.

Leipzig.

**Otto Harrassowitz.**

Advertisements by Otto Harrassowitz frequently appeared in the Börsenblatt: book requests, advertising for the catalogs, job advertisements (here from the years 1877 and 1878).

well. For example, Catalog number 168, published in 1890 on the subject of "Orientalia," states: "The edition of this catalog, which contains a large number of new Oriental prints not yet known in the book trade, gives me cause to point out the extremely carefully cultivated specialty of my business of making Oriental publications available to the scholars of Europe and America quickly and at moderate prices."

## EXPORT BUSINESS

When Justin Winsor (1831–1897), librarian at Harvard College Library in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and founder of the American Library Association (ALA), approached Otto in 1882, no one could have guessed that this would establish the business focus for the future. Harrassowitz was commissioned to acquire German-language academic literature for the Harvard Library and soon thereafter for other American libraries. With this, American libraries established the *Country of Origin* acquisition principle, which became the standard in the following years.

The export business to the United States was already so extensive in 1885 that a separate department was created for it at Harrassowitz. The company was prospering and hired two more assistants. But even though this might seem to have been a rapid success story, it was not at all easy for Otto to gain a foothold in the American market, where long-established companies—such as that of his uncle, Bernhard Westermann, in New York—were already living off imports to America. Other companies such as Brockhaus and Koehler now also nurtured trade relationships with American libraries. In the end, it was the tremendous upswing in American education, higher education, and library services that opened up the market to new entrants.

### **“THE HONEST BOOKSELLER OF EUROPE”**

Otto Harrassowitz knew how to respond to the needs of his new customers. In 1885, at the American Library Association (ALA) Annual Conference in Lake George, New York, the members of the Committee on Book Binding complained bitterly about the poor quality of German book bindings. Before the industrial production of books, the customer bought only the printed sheets and had their own trusted bookbinder make a self-designed book cover. By 1885, books were being provided with a so-called “publisher’s binding.” These were often simple, wire-stitched bindings that fell far short of librarians’ requirements for durability and appearance. Otto therefore immediately contacted various Leipzig bookbinderries to jointly

develop a high-quality binding style. He sent a sample collection to the next American Library Association (ALA) Annual Conference in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in 1886. It was reviewed by the experts on site who found the binding to be good. This clever move won him a number of additional customers.

Dealing with serialized works and journals presents a greater challenge for booksellers. Reliably delivering serials at irregular intervals, as well as the seamless and rapid delivery of academic journals, remains the “touchstone of an agent’s ability” to this day. Otto developed a very successful system for this as well, based not only on his personal commitment and a sophisticated control and monitoring process but also on technical and organizational aspects. This commitment made an impression on libraries and led to Harrassowitz’s being recommended again and again. Many letters of inquiry to Harrassowitz’s business therefore started with a pleasant “Your firm has been recommended to me by...”

Otto was given the title “the honest bookseller of Europe” at an American Library Association (ALA) meeting. The fundamental principles according to which he ran his business—fairness and integrity—turned many interactions that started as mere business relationships into genuine friendships. As a result, some American librarians would stop by to visit him in Leipzig on their trips to Europe.





## THE AMERICAN LIBRARY SYSTEM AND ITS SIMILARITY TO THE GERMAN MODEL

The two Göttingen library directors, Johann Matthias Gesner (1734–1761) and Christian Gottlob Heyne (1763–1812), succeeded in systematically expanding the Göttingen collection during their terms of office. In doing so, they were completely committed to academia. As a result, the Göttingen University Library was considered one of the most important libraries in Germany and the prototype of a university library. The holdings were indexed by an extensive catalog system that linked all subcatalogs. Within a few decades, Göttingen became the first university library of European importance; by 1800, its holdings already numbered around 150,000 volumes.

When Benjamin Franklin visited Göttingen in 1766, his journey also took him to the university. As a co-founder of the legendary Library Company of Philadelphia in 1731, where he himself had served as librarian for a number of years, he could not pass up a visit to this institution. He was followed by other Americans, some as students, whose influence on American librarianship was demonstrably shaped by their time in Göttingen. George Ticknor (1791–1871), for example, later a professor at Harvard University, studied in Göttingen with his friend Edward Everett (1794–1865), later president of Harvard. The later Harvard librarian Joseph Green Cogswell (1786–1871) also received his first instruction in librarianship in Göttingen. The American guests were particularly impressed by Göttingen University Library's liberal usage principles, which allowed student lending early on. Their experience and knowledge gained in Göttingen became tremendously important to the American library system, which was just beginning to develop. In particular, the influence of these personal connections and the incipient transfer of knowledge must be viewed in light of the fact that at that time there were no textbooks on library science, which was also just beginning to develop as a discipline.

## **THE ORIENTAL DEPARTMENT**

The 19th century was the age of colonialism. Like all the major European powers, Germany was acquiring territories in Africa, Asia, and the Pacific at the time. These political developments were accompanied by a noticeable rise in Oriental studies at German universities, not the least of which were in Leipzig. However, in the book trade, Otto was still breaking new ground when he shifted his focus to this subject during the 1880s. Despite the ubiquitous enthusiasm for the Orient, only a few booksellers initially tried their hand at this business, which seemed to promise rather little profit given the generally modest, manageable demand. But it was precisely this niche market that seems to have challenged and enticed Otto. Although he did not have the appropriate language skills, he initially made use of existing contacts with academics in Bombay and Calcutta, later expanding his field of work to Persia and Central Asia. It gave him the greatest pleasure to be holding “for the first time, a printed product from a print shop that until then existed only as a rumor or was not known at all,” he wrote, “the more remote and unknown the printing location, printer, and print shop, the better.” “Mr. Otto,” as he was respectfully called in the Orient, also took countless works on commission. In 1891, an independent Oriental department was established in his store, and new Oriental acquisitions were frequently added to the *Berichte über neue Erwerbungen* (reports on new acquisitions). This created an important line of business for the company for a long time to come. In 1896, the import department already included holdings of 50,000 books on Oriental studies. From 1911, a quarterly list of new publications in the field of Oriental studies in Germany and abroad was published, initially under the title *Ephemerides Orientales* (from 1929, under the title *Litterae Orientalis*).

## **HARRASSOWITZ VERLAG (PUBLISHING HOUSE)**

In 1884, Otto Harrassowitz made an important entrepreneurial decision for the further development of the publishing house: His initial bad experiences in publishing—not all publications and journals did well—had convinced him that concentrating only on specific subject areas would lead to success here too. As a result, he put his company’s publishing activities on hold for the first few years to focus on other things. The books he still published were the result of his work as an antiquarian bookseller and the personal contacts he had made with academics. They were rather sporadic products and were not yet the result of a specific publishing program.

## Litterae Orientales

Orientalistischer Literaturbericht

erscheinen 4 mal jährlich  
und bilden eine Bibliographie  
aller Neu-Erscheinungen auf dem  
Gesamtgebiet der Orientalistik des  
In- und Auslandes und des Orients



OTTO HARRASSOWITZ

Spezialbuchhandlung für Geschichte,  
Sprachen und Literaturen des Orients

LEIPZIG C 1

Herrn

Otto Harrassowitz

Leipzig C 1

Querstraße 14

(Deutschland)

Postcard for orders from Harrassowitz, which at the same time advertised the *Litterae Orientales*, 1930s.

This was now going to change. Familiar through his contacts with the problems of academic libraries, Otto kept a watchful eye on developments there. When a new professional journal, the *Centralblatt für Bibliothekswesen*, was founded, he became its publisher. The first issue stated, The *Centralblatt für Bibliothekswesen* comes into being at a time when major changes have taken place in the field of German librarianship and others seem to be in the offing. Our journal's mission will be to follow their development, shed light on all aspects of them, and promote them.

Both sides of the company gained great advantages from this new business field. A program had finally been found for the underused publishing house, and the antiquarian bookstore had another focus: library science. And the *Centralblatt*, which was to become the most important professional journal for German librarians, had a publisher who not only cared about German librarianship but also promoted its international reach as a result of his contacts.

Otto was particularly proud that he, a Protestant publisher, was trusted by the Catholic Church and the Vatican Library to publish important works. This was not particularly lucrative, just like Oriental studies and “Festschriften” (commemorative publications) in honor of deserving scholars. But Otto’s goal in these publication activities was not only pecuniary gain. He also wanted to demonstrate his commitment to academia.

Other opportunities often arose from the publishing commission business; for example, the distribution for foreign publishers and for academic societies. This started as early as 1877 with the Russian Palestine Society in St. Petersburg, which Harrassowitz represented as a commission publisher, and was followed by the Academia Romana in Bucharest, the Kildeskriftsfond in Christiania, the University of Chicago Press, the University of California at Berkeley, the *Harvard Oriental Series*, and the Oriental Institute in Vladivostok, to name a few. The Brill publishing house from Leiden in the Netherlands handed over the *Mnemosyne* journal to him, and Otto set up a distribution warehouse for this client’s Oriental publications.

## THE FOUNDER: OTTO HARRASSOWITZ (1845–1920)

Married to Louise, née Seidlitz (1856–1935), from 1879

Birth of son Hans Harrassowitz on December 7, 1895

We can reconstruct successful entrepreneur Otto Harrassowitz's many and varied activities, as well as document his social rise, based on advertisements, articles, and news items from the *Börsenblatt für den Deutschen Buchhandel und die mit ihm verwandten Geschäftszweige* journal.

He was awarded many different honors throughout his life. In 1880, he was appointed Consul of the United States of Venezuela in recognition of his father's work there. He repeatedly showed that he was a generous benefactor to academia and librarianship. Otto was a member of the Deutsche Börsenverein (German Publishers and Booksellers Association) from 1875 and was involved in various committees.

He held the post of chairman of the German Publishers and Booksellers Association's library committee from 1902 to 1912.

In the Centralverein für das gesamte Buchgewerbe (Central Association for the Entire Book Trade) in Leipzig, founded in 1884, he worked with his colleagues to bring art and the book printing trade together and to shape the "book printers and publishers' taste."

In 1910, Otto was awarded the title of Royal Saxon Court Counselor for his services to the book trade. A year later, he donated a large sum to the Verein Deutscher Bibliothekare (Association of German Librarians), but it came to light only posthumously that he was the generous donor.

His company's participation in the International Exhibition of Book and Graphic Arts in Leipzig (Bugra) in 1914, a high point of Otto's involvement, did not meet with the hoped-for response due to the outbreak of war in the same year.

After many years of illness, Otto Harrassowitz died on June 24, 1920, at the age of 74.



Otto Harrassowitz, 1914.

## IN MR. LUBLIN'S STORE

The Hebrew writer and later Israeli Nobel Prize winner for literature Shmuel Yosef Agnon (1888–1970) spent fourteen months in Leipzig, from the early summer of 1917 to April 1919, during which time he worked for Otto Harrasowitz, whose Hebrew book collections he compiled into bibliographies. In his posthumously published novel *In Mr. Lublin's Store*, Agnon describes his life in the city and the living conditions of the Jewish population there in great detail. He describes real people, places, and locations in Leipzig but uses different names for them. In the novel, for example, the narrator works for the Thomas Caspar Marius bookstore, which really stands for the Otto Harrasowitz company.

*"I spend three or four days a week at the Thomas Caspar Marius Sr. and Sons book store for books on Oriental languages. The store is huge, with a multitude of books. There are books as far as the eye can see, some that we have heard of and others that we have never heard of before [...] So after I had made Mr. Marius' acquaintance, he invited me to visit his store [...] Before I left, he had entrusted me with the Hebrew books at his store and had worked out a salary for me."*



Overview of the German Publishers and Booksellers Association library's holdings development, 1914.

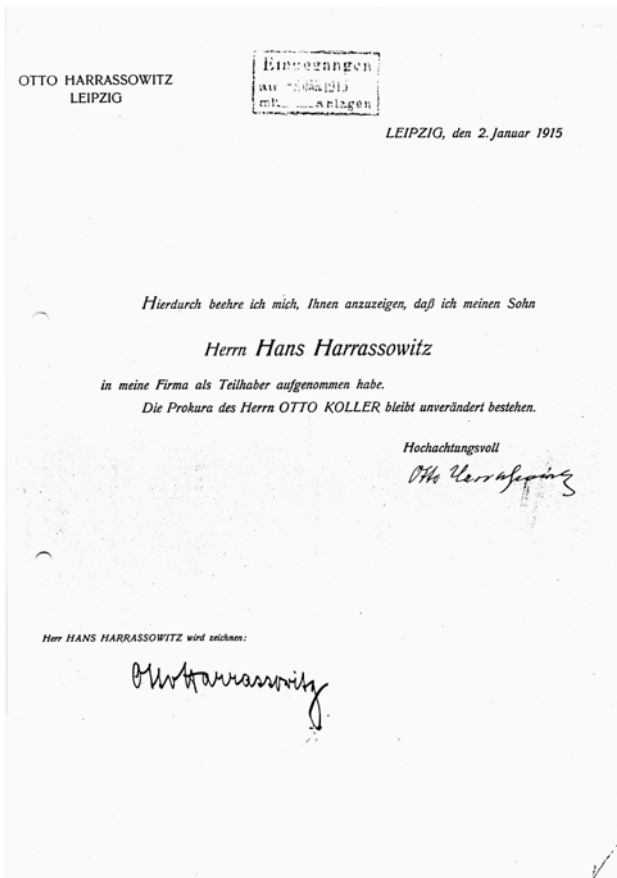
## NEW GENERATION

The business as an agent for American libraries had grown rapidly. In 1897, the year of the company's 25th anniversary, Harrassowitz already had forty American libraries as permanent customers; the company was known in the United States as the *Library Agent*. This was also partly the reason for the rapid development of commission publishing, because foreign libraries as well as other institutions and private scholars entrusted the distribution of their publications to Harrassowitz. To cope with the many tasks, Otto Harrassowitz had to invest in modern office equipment. In 1899, the first female employee was hired at Harrassowitz to work with a typewriter. In the same year, modern office technology was introduced in the form of registries, card indexes, and double-entry bookkeeping. In 1906, the Harrassowitz publishing catalog already contained 1,000 publications. However, the sequel catalog planned for 1914 to mark Otto's fiftieth anniversary in business was abandoned due to the outbreak of war.

Despite many invitations and good personal contacts, Otto never found the time to travel to the Orient or the United States. This opportunity only opened up to his son and successor, Hans Harrassowitz. After a longer apprenticeship in the United States, Hans took part in the International Orientalist Congress in Athens in 1912 and went on from there to Constantinople. He also took over management of the company in 1914, after his father had not been able to be regularly present at the business for some time due to a progressive illness.

The first years were difficult. In the summer of 1914, the First World War broke out. Less than a month later, on August 26, 1914, Hans wrote a letter to the librarian of Yale University. Although, as he informed his customer, he was able to "maintain his business operations in full" and at least send out printed matter, parcels to foreign countries were prohibited for the time being. The letter was written in German "because, due to the state of war, letters written in foreign languages and addressed to foreign countries will not be delivered by the post office until further notice. Also, letters can only be sent there open." In another letter, dated October





Hans Harrassowitz becomes a partner in 1915 and signs with Otto Harrassowitz in the future.

1914, Hans pointed out the possibility in the future of sending books to the United States via the neutral ports of Rotterdam and Copenhagen. Hans was a patriot. He assured his business partner that Germany was being discredited by the “propaganda of its enemies abroad” and enclosed some printed matter that was intended to provide information “about how things truly were.” And the war gave him a new business idea: that same year, he added the collection of German historical documents to his program. The University of Chicago Library immediately commissioned him, and Hans now had all the war-related materials collected, such as leaflets, propaganda materials, etc. Unlike other booksellers, he was willing to take the financial risk involved.

The austerity or scarcity of goods brought about by the war, which all areas of life were suffering from, could also be seen in the company’s products. If you pick up catalog number 382 from 1918, for example, you immediately notice the poor paper quality. It is very different from the very elaborately produced copies from better times. The Orient business also

suffered permanently as a result of the war, though demand for Turkish literature increased in the short term, as Germany and the Ottoman Empire became allies in August 1914.

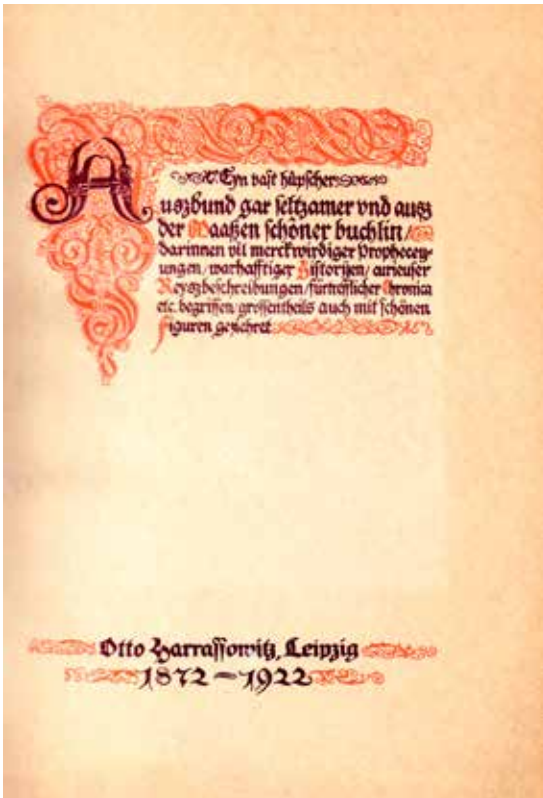
When the Verein der Deutschen Antiquariats- und Export-Buchhändler e.V. (Association of German Antiquarian and Export Booksellers) was founded in Leipzig just before the end of the First World War, on September 20, 1918, Hans was a founding member. The aim of the association, which became an institute of the German Publishers and Booksellers Association in 1927, was to protect the economic interests of its members in tax, customs, and special export matters, which proved its worth during the years of inflation too.

The difficulty of the situation in the post-war period was already evident in the fall of 1920, when the city of Leipzig's police files show Hans was prosecuted for a criminal offense: he had stored coal without coupons, meaning that he probably bought it on the black market to be able to heat his store. The penalty for this offense was a fine of 300 marks or 20 days in jail. Hans opted for the fine.

There were more difficult years ahead: Paper prices rose from a pre-war price of around ten marks per 100 kilograms to almost a hundred times that in 1922. Harrassowitz had to react to the inflationary rate and also increase its prices accordingly. To save the principle of fixed retail prices, the Börsenverein now published so-called key figures with which the applicable retail price was to be multiplied.

In 1923, the new business owner traveled to the United States to revive the old business connections there. Like his father, who had died in 1920, he became involved in the Börsenverein and also took Otto's place on the library committee, in which he served from 1924 to 1934.

These years also saw the creation of *A statement of my system in dealing with American Libraries*, a kind of general terms and conditions for doing business in America. According to this, the company's top priority was to process each order on an individual basis—quickly and carefully. One of the company's particular focuses was on standing orders and supply of serial publications, in which Harrassowitz specialized. An agent was “a really good agent” only if he could make life easier for his customers in this respect: “Realizing this from my long years of experience in the library business and from my personal discussion of business questions with many librarians in the occasions of my American visits, I have built up my organization with these specific demands and needs in view.”



The publication of book catalog number 392, *Thousand Old Prints from Three Centuries (1468-1772)*, on the occasion of the company's 50th anniversary in 1922, was certainly a major accomplishment.



Zeppelin over the Capitol in Washington, 1928.



Modern advertising technology:  
the company's first logo, 1932.

One special event in the late 1920s was the spectacular Atlantic crossings by the Graf Zeppelin airship, which carried passengers as well as mail. Hans took the first opportunity to send a postcard to the Yale librarian in 1928. The latter thanked him: “You will be interested to know that the card came in first-class condition with the stamp intact and that I shall place it permanently in our Yale collection.”

Information about the business processes at Harrassowitz during the Weimar period is provided by the memoirs of Sigfred Taubert, later director of the Frankfurt Book Fair, who began his career at Harrassowitz in Leipzig in the 1930s. Initially quite skeptical because the company name, while synonymous with quality among connoisseurs in the industry, was not one of those that were generally known. “I was hesitant at first. Otto Harrassowitz? The name meant nothing to me. I had Brockhaus, Teubner, the Insel-Verlag, and other well-known and famous publishers in mind.” And yet, the choice turned out to be most fortunate. Taubert described his first impressions very clearly. The company was larger and, above all, more diverse than expected, and the first conversation in the elegantly furnished room of the boss, Hans Harrassowitz, was brief and somewhat distant, but successful. Sigfred Taubert was accepted as an apprentice and began his training with Otto Venediger in the antiquarian bookstore.

By 1931, Harrassowitz already had more than 100 employees. The ground floor housed the accounting department, the standing orders department for journals, and the packing room. The second floor housed the

# Otto Harrassowitz, Library Agent, Leipzig

## A statement of my system in dealing with American Libraries

### 1. General Remarks-Organization.

The leading principle of my business is „*Individual Treatment to Every Order*“. To accomplish this in the highest possible degree, every order as received is turned over to one of five departments of my Business-Organization, to be treated according to its individual needs. These five Departments, working parallel to each other, independently though in constant mutual understanding, are the following:

- I. Dept. of Regular Current Orders
- II. Special Rush Service Department
- III. Dept. of Standing Orders
- VI. Continuation Department
- V. Periodical Department.

As to I. I consider it as a matter of course that every good agent should fill orders for current books and periodicals with promptness and accuracy, and I make every effort to have our standard of service in this line exceptionally high.

Also as to II it is primarily a matter of the accurate working of those in charge to insure the quickest possible service.

Special emphasis however should be laid upon III to V, for it is in these lines of business that the agent has the opportunity of rendering really valuable service to the Library. When the agent can give the Librarian the feeling of being convinced, that every order once placed is promptly attended to; that he does not need to take the trouble to claim old orders, fearing they may have been overlooked and forgotten, or to claim continuations, which may have appeared but have not been supplied; that current periodical subscriptions are supplied regularly without any lacunae which will be impossible to fill up later; if an agent removes from the Librarian all such and similar troubles, only then has he the right of being looked upon as a really good agent. Realizing this from my long years of experience in library business and from my personal discussions of business questions with many Librarians on the occasions of my American visits, I have built up my organization with these specific demands and needs in view.

### 2. Current Orders.

Orders placed without comment are treated as regular current orders and the items are secured and shipped in the regular course of business. As a rule, books in print will be sent off within four weeks from date of receipt of order, so that books will reach the Library within eight weeks from date of placing order. If items are to be bound, an additional two weeks are needed. Re binding see 12.

Orders not filled within three months from date of receipt of order will be reported upon.

Re second hand and o/p books see 5 and 6.

### 3. Rush Orders.

Items urgently needed are to be marked on order as „Rush“. They will be treated accordingly by our „Special Rush Service“. As a rule such books if in print are sent off within one week from receipt of order, so that they are in the Library within five weeks from date of placing the order. If „rush“ books are o/p, or cannot be secured immediately for other reasons, they will be reported upon and at same time searched for secondhand. „Rush“ books are always sent by mail (see 16).

Rush orders are not held for bindings unless it is specially requested (see 12).

Rush orders are filled disregarding high publisher's prices (see 8).

Rush orders are filled even if title proves to be misspelled or part of series, reprint, etc. (see 11).

### 4. Standing Orders.

Standing orders are those which for some reason or other cannot be filled immediately (see 2). Such orders are turned over to the „Dept. of Standing Orders“ to be filed on cards and worked upon continuously by all means possible. Whenever found at a reasonable price, they are supplied without previous report. (Re „Reasonable price“ see 8.)

executive office, the secretary's office, the antiquarian bookstore, and the publishing house. Even further up was the America department, the largest and economically most important branch of the business at Harrassowitz; right next to it was the Orient department. Taubert remembered the relationship between the antiquarian bookstore and the publishing house as being excellent: "The fields he cultivated, i.e., book and library studies and Oriental studies, were closely related to the antiquarian bookstore's main subjects. And the publishing manager, Miss Kretzschmar, was well liked by Otto Venediger and his co-conspirators as an equally capable and charming colleague."

## THE SUCCESSOR: HANS HARRASSOWITZ (1885–1964)

Married to Gertrud, née Otto (1892–1983), from 1915

Birth of son Friedrich (1915–1943) on June 9, 1915

Birth of daughter Gisela (1919–1925) on August 28, 1919

Until 1905, Hans Harrassowitz attended the Thomasschule school in Leipzig's Bach quarter, a high school steeped in tradition and specializing in the humanities, classical language, and music. After graduating high school, he began an apprenticeship as a bookseller at his father's company. In 1908, he traveled to the United States for the first time, where he volunteered at Harvard University Library to learn American librarianship from the ground up until 1909. In the fall of the same year, he worked for three months as a volunteer at the Library of Congress, later becoming lifelong friends with its director, George Herbert Putnam. In 1910, Hans returned to Germany and started working at his father's business.

The change in generations at Harrassowitz was envisaged a bit differently, but due to the company founder's being seriously ill, everything had to happen very quickly. In 1911, Hans was granted power of attorney, and in 1915 he also became a partner. A number of experienced and long-standing employees were at his side from the beginning: the authorized signatory Otto Koller as well as Georg Limbach and Otto Venediger, whom Hans Harrassowitz appointed as authorized signatories.

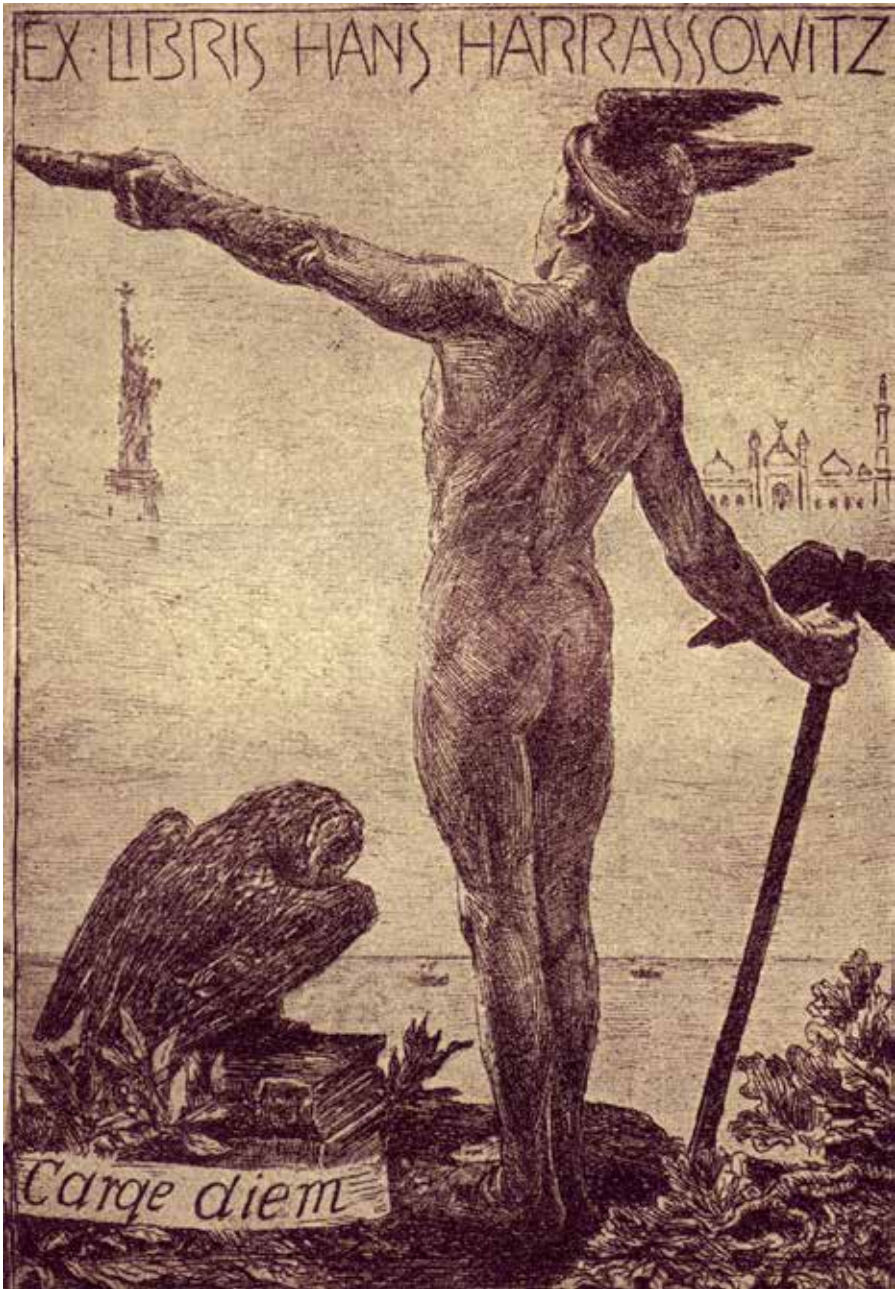
Hans was a true car enthusiast and liked driving fast. He was also interested in alternative lifestyles, as evidenced by a visit to the legendary artists colony on Monte Verità in Ticino in 1930.





Hans Harrassowitz, 1930s.





Ex Libris of Hans Harrassowitz by Bruno Héroux, 1910s. The winged messenger of the gods and at the same time god of commerce Mercury as a light-footed bearer of scholarly books for the United States and the Orient, indicated by the Statue of Liberty and an Oriental cityscape. The well-known Leipzig painter and graphic artist Bruno Héroux had certainly designed this Ex Libris for Hans Harrassowitz tongue in cheek. Perhaps he had thus captured the self-image of the bookseller at its best and also included his motto “Carpe diem” in the Ex Libris. The owl sitting on the books, as a symbol of wisdom, certainly stands for the scholarly focus of the books.

## CRISIS YEARS

In 1933, Harrassowitz took over the Markert & Petters publishing house, which was completely absorbed into the company. The National Socialists had declared the previous owner, Karl Markert, unfit to run an “Aryan business.” Presumably, people had taken issue with his contacts in the Slavic countries and to his publishing focus on Slavic and Hebrew studies, but above all with his membership in a Masonic association. Markert stayed at Harrassowitz until 1945, where he became an authorized signatory in 1937.

Another significant event in the 1930s was the arrival of a new employee in 1936, who would later take over management duties and shares in the company in succession to the Harrassowitz family. The bookseller Richard Dorn (1906–1992), then 30 years old, had already gained professional experience in Basel and Munich and was now to primarily take care of Chinese library customers at Harrassowitz in Leipzig. Business with China developed very promisingly in the 1930s, at least until July 7, 1937, when Japan invaded the country, breaking off all business relations from one day to the next. Richard was a young family man and from time to time brought his little son Knut to the company.

### THE COMPANY DURING THE NAZI ERA

Heinrich Becker (1891–1971) also joined the company on recommendation at the same time as Richard Dorn. The former Undersecretary for Libraries and Primary Schools had been dismissed by the National Socialists in 1933. At Harrassowitz, he initially worked on a publishing catalog.

The acquisition of the Markert & Petters publishing house had added important publications in the field of Slavic studies to the Harrassowitz publishing program. These included the *Journal of Slavic Philology* and publications by the Slavic Institute at Berlin Humboldt University.

Heinrich Becker, who had been responsible for publishing management since October 1, 1937, took a sober view of the situation of scholarly publishers in National Socialist Germany. On the one hand, he concluded that there had been a thorough process of bringing them into line

politically. On the other hand, scholarly specialist publishers were allowed to continue their work relatively unchecked, probably also due to a lack of interest. On the contrary, the new regime liked to embellish its public image by “fooling the world [...] into believing in a certain academic renaissance in Nazi Germany[...].”

As a result, there were generally no publication bans at Harrassowitz—quite the opposite, as even more new publications were possible, albeit to a reduced extent. In-house, the successes of the other departments financially supported the less economically successful publishing house. And although the outbreak of war made it increasingly difficult to procure materials, new series continued to see the light of day, such as the *Otto Harrassowitz Language Textbooks*. These were textbooks for rare foreign languages; for example, the *Hindustani Language Textbook* published in 1945.

There was now also a branch in Paris, at number 11 Rue de Sèvres, under the company name Otto Harrassowitz, Exportbuchhandlung, Verlag und Antiquariat in Leipzig. Hans Harrassowitz had taken up this project at the suggestion of his business partners and had been working on it since as early as 1932. The employees were French, and the branch was run by librarian Karl Frank, who, according to American sources, was suspected of spying on booksellers and publishers for the Nazis. The Paris branch’s remit was to procure and ship French scholarly literature for German and foreign libraries, universities, institutes, and scholars.

Wer orientalisch orientiert  
In fremden Sprachen gut versiert,  
der findet bei Harrassowitz  
bald einen guten Polstersitz.  
Wo Orient und Occident  
nur noch die Kontenführung trennt,  
sieht auch der Theobald sich um,  
zumal zwei Jahre sind herum.  
Oh Weisheitsschmiede von Äonen,  
wie muß bei dir der Handel lohnen!

Nur wenn er 15 Pfennig kostet,  
wird hier ein Katalog verpostet.  
Was Wissenschaft in Reinkultur,  
erlebt man ohne Zweifel, nur  
in Katalogen von O.H.  
Auch Theobald nichts besseres sah.  
Es bleibt der Systematik Preis,  
wenn der Verweis auf den Verweis  
verweist und, wieder umgekehrt,  
auf das verweist, was man entbehrt.

Keeping spirits high: “*Theobald der Antiquar*” (*Theobald the Antiquarian Bookseller*) cantata from 1937, dedicated to the participants of the *Wirtschaftsverband Deutscher und Ausländischer Antiquariats- und Exportbuchhändler* (German Trade Association of German and Foreign Antiquarian and Export Booksellers) annual meeting (excerpt).

Leipzig mourned the death of Georg Otto Venediger (1871–1937), who worked at Harrassowitz as an authorized signatory and its first antiquarian bookseller for 30 years and whose rigorous training process had seen many aspiring antiquarian booksellers successfully pass through. In his position as editor of the Oriental studies catalogs, he contributed significantly to the Harrassowitz company's worldwide reputation.

## **AT WAR**

Whereas Harrassowitz had previously been able to cope to some extent with the new circumstances and the National Socialist cultural policy, it was now no longer possible to close its eyes to the impending war in Europe.

With the outbreak of war in 1939, Richard Dorn was conscripted into the Wehrmacht and was stationed in various places, including Paris. The son of the owner and designated successor, Friedrich Harrassowitz, also was sent to the front at the beginning of the war. He was 24 years old. Hans Harrassowitz, like most of his senior staff, was of an age to be spared immediate conscription.

Heinrich Becker, who became an authorized signatory in the company in 1939, described in his memoirs the prevailing mood at Harrassowitz at the time. It was not particularly pro-regime, even though the company boss had become a “paying member of the Hitler Party,” because he expected it would be advantageous for the company, though no other employee was coerced into taking this step. Although he was a Party member, Hans Harrassowitz received an official reprimand from the president of the Reichsschrifttumskammer (Reich Chamber of Literature) in 1940 for distributing publishing directories from Scandinavian publishers that included works by Jewish authors.

In 1940, Hans celebrated his 25th anniversary as a *Betriebsführer* (business leader), as the position was called at that time. Despite the war, the company set up a voluntary intracompany *loyalty support fund* for its employees to mark the occasion. But the danger and terror of war was getting ever closer to home. Heinrich Becker, who experienced the first air raid on Munich during a vacation trip the same year, was so shaken by it that he immediately started planning emergency measures for the company. With the approval of company management, card indexes and lists were photographed and stored in a suitcase at Beuron Abbey in the Danube Valley. Together with Karl Markert, the manager of the antiquarian bookstore, the most valuable books were selected and moved from their storage in the



Harrassowitz Company in Querstrasse after the destruction in 1943.



Current view of Hauptmannstrasse 1.

attic to the cellar. The typewriters, considered irreplaceable, were also carried down to the cellar every evening after closing.

Gustav Limbach, who had worked for the company for almost 50 years and had been an authorized signatory of the company since 1920, died on January 30, 1943. Although he had been retired for several years, he still came regularly to support the company during this difficult time until a few days before his death.

As mentioned previously, Leipzig was attacked by Allied bombers on the night of December 3 to 4, 1943, killing more than 1,800 people. Millions of books also burned in the city, including those belonging to Harrassowitz. The company premises were completely destroyed, and the building burned down to the cellars. All the precautionary measures had been in vain.

Hans was on vacation in Bavaria when his representative Heinrich Becker could do nothing but watch helplessly as the building burned down. Some of the alternate storage areas were also hit. From today's perspective, we can only express our admiration and astonishment at how quickly everything apparently returned to normal after the catastrophe. A few days later, a small advertisement appeared in the *Börsenblatt* in which the company asked its customers to send it duplicates of all paid and unpaid invoices from the period after October 1, 1943. Just before Christmas, they were informed that their journal subscriptions and standing orders would continue.

After the destruction of its business premises, Hans Harrassowitz's own private apartment in Hauptmannstrasse became the new company headquarters, where an additional floor could fortunately be rented a short time later. An employee was immediately sent to Beuron to pick up the

films containing the extremely important business data. He made a detour via Vienna to have the material developed there. Doing this in Leipzig would have taken too long, because the few photo stores still operating were overwhelmed with orders.

Another air raid in February also caused damage to the new business premises, which interrupted work for an additional two weeks. All publishing deliveries were now made from a warehouse 50 kilometers away in Altenburg, Thuringia. The employees had to travel there every day. In the meantime, Hans was even considering moving the business to a branch office in Vienna, especially when he received a letter from the Labor Office in August 1944 asking him to release 22 of his workers. This would have meant the closure of his business, but at least he managed to avert this minor disaster. It was probably a misunderstanding on the part of the Labor Office, which had outdated employee figures.

These were difficult years for the company and for Hans Harrassowitz himself. The economic difficulties and the Herculean task of maintaining a reasonable ongoing business were coupled with private worries. His son Friedrich, affectionately dubbed Fritz, was considered missing in action at Stalingrad from 1943. He had completed his apprenticeship at the company before being called into service, and even though Hans and his wife Gertrud firmly believed in their son's return, they had to expect the worst.

#### **AN EXPORT BOOKSTORE WITHOUT ANY EXPORTS**

In 1936, Harrassowitz had still advertised with the same slogan on the back of a catalog: "From all countries – to all countries." However, although the United States initially remained neutral, it became increasingly difficult to send goods there due to the British naval blockade. This was compounded by an increasingly restrictive U.S. government policy of not sending dollars into areas occupied by German troops. Harrassowitz tried to continue serving its customers worldwide through companies in neutral foreign countries. Customers were also very keen to maintain the business relationship with the Leipzig-based company. The American Library Association (ALA) and the Medical Library Association together with other American libraries, had formed the Joint Committee on Importations as early as 1939 to ensure the acquisition of important European scholarly journals.

Shipping from ports in Italy and the Netherlands was still possible until 1940, but this route was also blocked after Italy declared war on England and France. A member of the Joint Committee on Importations then



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**OTTO HARRASSOWITZ**  
**LEIPZIG**

**Internationale Buchhandlung und Antiquariat**

Telephon 13513 — Kabelwort: Harrassowitz Leipzig



*„Aus allen Ländern — nach allen Ländern“*

**IMPORT**

aus allen Ländern, von Büchern und Zeitschriften, die trotz Devisenschwierigkeiten rasch und zu Preisen, die den ausländischen Währungen angepaßt sind, besorgt werden

**EXPORT**

deutscher Druckerzeugnisse jeder Art nach allen Ländern der Erde

\*

**DIE ZEITSCHRIFTENABTEILUNG**

vermittelt prompte Lieferung jeder Zeitschrift jeder Gattung aus und nach jedem Lande

**DIE ORIENTABTEILUNG**

besorgt Druckwerke des nahen und fernen Orients

\*

Verlangen Sie regelmäßige kostenlose Zusendung von

**LITTERAE ORIENTALES**

Orientalistischer Literaturbericht. Eine vierteljährlich erscheinende Bibliographie aller Neuerscheinungen auf dem Gesamtgebiet der Orientalistik

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DRUCK VON A. HEISE OMBL, GRÄFENHAINICHEN

Advertisement on the back of a  
Harrassowitz catalog, 1936.



Library of Congress European Mission, center:  
Reuben Peiss, with pipe, 1946.

traveled to Rome to arrange for book shipments to be stored at the American Academy. Harrassowitz was also contacted. The company was to collect and securely store publications destined for U.S. research libraries. But the entry of the United States into the war on December 11, 1941, gradually brought all communication and exchange of goods to a complete standstill. Hans Harrassowitz still managed to undertake exports to the United States via Switzerland and also received payments this way until 1942.

It was therefore a great relief in the summer of 1945 when Reuben Peiss (1912–1952), the head of the Library of Congress European Mission, came to Leipzig, where he met with Hans Harrassowitz. He was shocked by the destruction in the city. At least the military government issued an order exempting the company from confiscations and seizures of assets after it was discovered that it worked for the most important U.S. libraries and stored books and journals worth around 250,000 dollars for them.



## THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS EUROPEAN MISSION

In 1942, a number of institutions and librarians in the United States came together and established the body known as the “LC European Mission.” They all were concerned about filling the gaps in libraries during the post-war period that had been caused by the war. The Library of Congress Librarian Luther Evans wrote in a 1945 *Library of Congress Information Bulletin* article that the main purpose was to make inquiries “about the present state of the book trade and libraries in Europe, about possibilities for cooperation between libraries, and about the location of copies of wartime publications.” In May 1945, Harvard librarian and former intelligence officer Reuben Peiss was appointed the first head of the LC European Mission in Germany. In January 1946, a group of librarians traveled to Germany on behalf of the U.S. War Department and the U.S. occupation government OMGUS (Office of Military Government for Germany US) to locate book collections that German booksellers had created for American libraries. The largest and most important holdings were in Soviet-occupied Leipzig, including books worth a total of 250,000 dollars at Harrassowitz alone. Very delicate negotiations with the Soviet occupation authorities followed, because Harrassowitz had not registered many of the books with them. Finally, in July 1946, a first large shipment of books worth more than 100,000 dollars was sent.

By 1947, many American libraries were already trying to reestablish direct contact with their former Leipzig partners.





The Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., 1902.

**OTTO HARRASSOWITZ, LEIPZIG**  
 Buchhandlung und Antiquariat Querstraße 14  
 Telegrammadresse: HARRASSOWITZ-LEIPZIG, Fernsprecher: Leipzig Nr. 12610

*Leipzig d. 26. 2. 1944*

Vollmacht.

Hierdurch bevollmächtige ich Herrn  
 Prokurist Heinrich Becker, geb.  
 25.5.1891, wohnhaft Markkleeberg, Damstr. 22,  
 alle Massnahmen zu treffen, die für die  
 Arbeit der Firma Otto Harrassowitz  
 erforderlich sind.

*Hans Harrassowitz*

Die vorstehende Unterschrift des Buch-  
 händlers Herrn Hans Harrassowitz in Leipzig, l.  
 Hauptstr. 1, wird hiermit bezeugt.  
 Leipzig, den 26. Februar 1944.  
 Der Inhabersbesitzer der Geschäftsstelle  
 beim Amtsgericht.  
*Kamrad*  
 Justizinspektor

Behördenfrei, da  
 die Firma ausson-  
 derteinwirkung. Vermerkt  
*Kamrad H.*

Power of attorney from Hans Harrassowitz for Heinrich Becker, dated February 26, 1944.

**OTTO HARRASSOWITZ / LEIPZIG**  
 BUCHHANDLUNG · VERLAG · ANTIQUARIAT  
 IMPORT · EXPORT

OTTO HARRASSOWITZ  
 QUERSTRASSE 14  
 LEIPZIG

Herrn Werner Dorn  
 F r a n k f u r t  
 Buchhandlung 22.

Herrn geehrter Herr Dorn,

Es freut mich an Sie mit Ihrer gefälligen Unternehmung zu gratulieren und Sie herzlich von Oktober 1947 als Leiter der neu zu gründenden Firma Otto Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden, willkommen zu heißen.

Einigkeitlich mit der Regierung der Firma in der Bundesrepublik vereinbart, die Einrichtung dieser Einzelhandels-  
 betriebe ist bereits amtsächlich 50 50% - (Fünfzweihundert) Prozent, als Einzelhandelsbetrieb wird jeweils ein Vierteljahr festgesetzt. Die Bewilligung zum Einzelhandelsbetrieb stellen Sie selbst vom Amtsgericht Wiesbaden her.

Ich freue mich, Sie nach Tätigkeitsübernahme wieder als einen Mitarbeiter in der Firma begrüßen zu können und Sie herzlich zu wünschen, dass Sie Ihre Arbeit in dieser neuen Situation, im neuen Arbeitsverhältnis ich bestmöglichste, durchzuführen werden. Ich verbleibe Ihnen herzlichste Grüße von der Geschäftsstelle und bitte Sie, mich in Zukunft über alle Fragen der Geschäftsverteilung mit Herrn Dorn in Vertretung zu versetzen.

Die bestmögliche Durchführung wollen Sie mir bitte - mit Ihrer Unterstützung - erreichen.

Hochachtungsvoll  
**OTTO HARRASSOWITZ**  
*Heinrich Harrassowitz*

Employment agreement and authorization for Richard Werner Dorn to establish a company in Wiesbaden dated October 23, 1947.

**The New York Public Library**  
 Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations

OFFICE OF THE  
 ACQUISITION DIVISION  
 FIFTH AVENUE & 42ND STREET  
 NEW YORK 18, N. Y. J.F.:rh

New York, January 29, 1948

Otto Harrassowitz Buchhandlung  
 Wiesbaden  
 Germany

AIR MAIL

Gentlemen:

Word has reached us that you have opened an office in Wiesbaden. If that is true, will you please let us know and tell us whether all our orders and correspondence may be sent to the Wiesbaden address?

Sincerely yours,  
*John Fall*  
 John Fall  
 Chief of the Acquisition Division

"Word has reached us..." letter from John Fall, 1948.

## NEW START

When Harrassowitz celebrated its 75th anniversary in 1947, the future of the company was completely open. There was still no news about the fate of Friedrich Harrassowitz, who had nevertheless been entered in the commercial register as the company's owner since 1946. His father sold him the company in his absence for 250,000 Reich marks. Publishing manager Heinrich Becker, who enjoyed the trust of the Harrassowitz family, had already been appointed as a trustee for absent Friedrich in February 1944 and had been given the appropriate power of attorney for this purpose. At the same time, Hans Harrassowitz also granted him power of attorney for all measures relating to the business.

Harrassowitz had already obtained a publishing license from the Soviet military authorities and could again serve contacts abroad. Hans was confident that he could get on with the reconstruction of the company in Leipzig. Richard Dorn's warnings went unheeded. At first, Hans ignored Richard's suggestion to completely move the company to the western occupation zones, where a new publishing and bookselling scene was emerging in Wiesbaden, Mainz, and Frankfurt. Hans and his wife, who had taken over the trusteeship for Friedrich Harrassowitz upon Heinrich Becker's retirement, did authorize Richard to set up a branch of the export, import, and antiquarian bookstore in Wiesbaden as managing director in 1948. Books and the important customer files were transported to Wiesbaden—at that time located in the American sector—on sometimes perilous and increasingly risky routes.

### EMERGENCY SOLUTIONS

Even at the new location, not everything ran smoothly. The location in Wiesbaden was initially very provisional, with the company's first headquarters being located in the Dorn family's private apartment. At that time, eleven families lived in the Gründerzeit villa where they were accommodated, making it very cramped. During the day, the Dorn family's bedroom was repurposed to serve as an office. Packages were taken to

## WIESBADEN, THE NEW LEIPZIG?

It was initially American troops who took Leipzig in 1945. However, it was clear that this would be only a temporary solution and that Leipzig was to be part of the Soviet occupation zone. For this reason, a number of publishers—including the owners of the publishing houses F. A. Brockhaus, Georg Thieme, Dieterich, and Insel—and their families had already been brought to Wiesbaden in the American-occupied zone in 1945 with the help of American troops. In nearby Frankfurt, the *Arbeitsgemeinschaft Deutscher Verleger- und Buchhändler-Verbände* (Working Group of German Publishers' and Booksellers' Associations) was formed in 1948 as an amalgamation of the booksellers' state associations in the American and British occupation zones. It was eventually renamed *Börsenverein Deutscher Verleger- und Buchhändlerverbände*, with its headquarters in Frankfurt am Main. The *Deutsche Buchhändlerschule* (German Booksellers School), now *Mediacampus Frankfurt*, has also been located there since 1959.

Nevertheless, no West German city or region could even come close to achieving an importance comparable to Leipzig as a book production and bookselling center.

the post office in a baby carriage, and Richard, with his many shipments to the United States, stretched the patience of the postal customers lined up behind him to its absolute limit. When a particularly large batch of books arrived from Leipzig, it was stored in the attic. This was not a good idea, because a few days later the ceiling no longer could hold the immense weight and the books fell several floors below. At least no one was harmed in the process, except for the books. One major problem for the publisher's delivery department was that some serials did not reach Wiesbaden from Leipzig completely intact. On a positive note, Richard did succeed in obtaining a publishing license for Harrassowitz in the American zone from the American occupation forces commission. The officer responsible for him in Frankfurt turned out to be none other than Otto Albrecht, music librarian at the University of Pennsylvania and long-time Harrassowitz customer. No wonder that the formalities were completed quickly.

A letter received by Richard Dorn in January 1948 was also very motivating: John Fall, a head of department at the New York Public Library, was eager to resume their business relationship. It is a miracle that the





Workplace surrounded by books.



There are still large gaps in the shelves.  
Sales warehouse at Hainerberg, 1950s.

letter reached Richard at all, because the company was not yet officially registered in Wiesbaden, the name of the city was misspelled, and there were no other address details.

Other well-known Leipzig booksellers, publishers, and antiquarian booksellers also found their way to Wiesbaden in the turmoil of the post-war period. For instance, Felix Weigel joined Harrassowitz in 1949 and took over the management of the Antiquarian and Oriental Studies department, which he more or less rebuilt from the ground up. He came from a traditional Leipzig bookseller family and had completed his training as an antiquarian bookseller with the Oriental studies expert Karl Markert.

In the 1950s, the Harrassowitz Wiesbaden branch was divided into two: the export business continued to be run from the Dorn family's apartment in Beethovenstrasse in Wiesbaden, while the Antiquarian and Oriental Studies department and its sales warehouse were located in Hainerberg.

## **BUREAUCRATIC OBSTACLES**

Meanwhile, the difficulties that companies such as Harrassowitz had to contend with in the Soviet occupation zone are evidenced in the transcripts of meetings at the Leipzig bookstore building that have been preserved in the files of the Börsenverein der Deutschen Buchhändler. In 1948, Harrassowitz was initially the only company to receive permission for small shipments of books abroad, a privilege obtained only by speaking directly with the Soviet general in charge. Over the next five months, about 2,000 two-pound packages, with a total value of 25,000 dollars, were sent out. The small size of the approved packages was a problem though, and the company tried to get ten-kilogram (about 22 lb) packages approved, to compete with booksellers in the Western occupation zones. In any case, the revenues generated were extremely important—for the occupation authorities too, because payments were in foreign currency that was directly transferred to the USSR Foreign Trade Administration. As an exporter, Harrassowitz received a bonus for this, which the company could use exclusively for any essential trips abroad, purchases of raw materials, and clothing for the workforce. In the same year, the bonus amount had to be shared with the publishers, who also needed foreign currency.

The Russian military administration's condition for that concession was that Harrassowitz ship its books on credit, which of course entailed a certain risk. The company worked out a process for this that allowed its customers to pay for the books only after receiving them. Payment also had to be made through certain banks for the benefit of the Soviet Military Administration in Germany (SMAD).

But thanks to the good relationships Harrassowitz maintained with its customers, this did not cause any problems. Arrangements also had to be made with customs administration. Although the packages did not have to be sealed individually, a customs officer accompanied the deliveries from the company to the post office. Because Harrassowitz was initially the sole exception as far as successfully resuming previous business relationships was concerned, the authorities often referred to this as the "Harrassowitz process," which they eventually wanted to extend to other selected companies and even to other industries.



## SPIRIT OF OPTIMISM

In Wiesbaden, the company's development made good progress, while the days of the Harrassowitz company in Leipzig were now numbered. On April 1, 1953, the company there became national property. And in October of the same year, the former Otto Harrassowitz Publishing House merged with the Bibliographisches Institut Leipzig (VEB). In the future, the name Otto Harrassowitz would appear in the GDR only as the departmental name of the Bibliographical Institute. Then, Hans Harrassowitz and his family secretly vanished to Wiesbaden in a cloak-and-dagger operation.

For a while, it was only possible to run the business from the Dorn family's private apartment, and provisional arrangements remained in place until the end of the 1950s. But that did not detract from the company's successes. Richard Dorn was the right man in the right place. His excellent language skills were indispensable in building the international business; he spoke English, French, Italian, and Swedish fluently. In addition, Richard had the same high standards for outstanding customer service that have always been a hallmark of Harrassowitz. American library customers responded very positively to the company's new location in the Federal Republic of Germany, and soon the company was flourishing again. In 1953, Richard undertook his first trip by ship to the United States and Canada to cultivate personal contacts there, to meet existing customers face to face, and to acquire new ones. Because of Harrassowitz's services in supplying American libraries during both world wars, he was even granted a special privilege: he was allowed to enter the United States without a visa.

### **COMPLETELY NEW BEGINNING: THE PUBLISHING HOUSE**

For the publishing house, the move to Wiesbaden meant a completely new beginning. The Leipzig holdings had been completely destroyed during the bombing of the city, and publishing manager Heinrich Becker had left shortly after the end of the war to devote himself to rebuilding the book and library scene there. The position of management of the publishing

## FARMINGTON PLAN

In 1942, a meeting of the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) was held in Farmington, Connecticut, at which time the Farmington Plan, named after the venue, was launched. Resulting from the experiences of two world wars, the plan was devised to guarantee the procurement of research materials and publications for the future as well. The intent was to ensure “that at least one copy of every new foreign book and pamphlet that might be of interest to researchers in the United States would be acquired by a U.S. library and would be quickly made available for interlibrary loan through the Library of Congress catalog.” The plan called for a cooperative purchasing program for foreign materials, organized by region and topic. The first decade initially focused on the (Western) European market. Booksellers were designated for all countries as the Farmington Plan’s on-site representatives, to purchase, classify, and send books directly to the approximately 60 participating libraries. However, the plan came under criticism on many points from the very beginning: Not all types of material were covered by the plan. Moreover, the one-sided focus on the Western European book market was always criticized. However, the few attempts to expand the scope of the plan to non-European countries failed. As relations between American libraries and the European book trade regenerated in the 1950s, the plan’s model—selection through special sales representatives—came under increased criticism, as many librarians became convinced they could make better selections themselves. This approach was therefore discontinued at the end of the 1960s.

temporarily fell to Hans Harrassowitz as a replacement for Becker. In 1953, the historian Dr. Ludwig Reichert took over the management of the publishing house and was quickly able to build on the successful pre-war years.

This successful new beginning was greatly aided by the revival of scholarly and academic life in the young Federal Republic of Germany. The need for new textbooks and materials free of a political agenda as well as the establishment of new research approaches and methods were vividly reflected in the publishing program. Major dictionary and encyclopedia companies characterized the 1960s and 1970s. Over the years, a plethora of new book series and journals emerged. The traditional program areas at Harrassowitz were expanded and extended. The company took



Bookstore labels from the 1920s  
...and from the 1950s.

the leading publishing role in the cataloging of occidental manuscripts in German libraries, a long-term project sponsored by the German Research Foundation since 1960.

#### **THRIVING EXPORT BOOK TRADE**

Around this time, Richard Dorn became the first German bookseller to travel to Australia and, shortly afterward, New Zealand to tour these countries, where he acquired all the university libraries as customers.

In 1964, Hans Harrassowitz died and bequeathed his share of the company to his wife Gertrud. She was assisted by Wilfred Becker Sr., who had been a partner in the company since 1956. He was a relative of Gertrud and had already worked for the company as an authorized signatory before joining the circle of shareholders. Wilfred took care of the finances and the publishing house.

In addition, authorized signatory Richard Dorn now also became a general partner, responsible for exports, as did authorized signatory Felix Weigel, who looked after the antiquarian bookstore and the Asian business. In the same year, Richard's son, Dr. Knut Dorn, also began his career at Harrassowitz, where he initially oversaw the American libraries business together with his father. The two of them constantly traveled around the United States, by car and by plane, preparing quotes for countless libraries. Knut took over responsibilities for his own areas after a short induction period. He still remembers this intense time well. "We both wrote reports on

Nr.	Datum	Auftagegeber	Titel	Zufolge	Einband	Umfang	Rechnung am
681	24.6.	Aka. Stein	Wiel	948	Broff.	11 1/4 + 9/8	11.7.57
682	27.6.	" "	Drüsing	959	Broff.	1 1/2 + 1/8	11.7.57
683	26.6.	Winter, Girdelberg	Fingerring 5 1/2	580	L	7 1/2	11.7.57
684	26.6.	V+R	Aspro. Zillertal	110	ge	24 1/2 + 1/8	11.9.57
685	'	V+R	Ribbeck, Hildesheim	2.885	hart.	16	26.8.57
686	'	V+R	Bühlmann, Göttingen	1003	Gyl.	1/2 + 25/2	23.7.57
687	'	V+R	Wolter, Göttingen	1068	galt.	1/2 + 1/11	21.8.57
688	27.6.	Beisins	Ernst, Göttingen	400	"	10	26.11.56
689	27.6.	Garnaffensitz	Kell. v. Meiner I, 2	550	"	7	10.7.57
690	1.7.	Aufpferstoff	B6B. Baumgarten	50	ge		
691	2.7.	V+R	Konrad, Göttingen	990	Broff.	1/4 + 1/8	1.8.57
692	4.7.	Garnaffensitz	Kirchhain	986	ge	26 1/2	22.10.57
693	4.7.	V+R	Kastner, Göttingen	2.600	hart.	4	1.8.57
694	5.7.	Garnaffensitz	Mittelg. Beisins	450	Broff.	27	26.8.57
695	8.7.	Winter,	fisch, Göttingen	1190	"	6	
696	8.7.	V+R	Kunst, Göttingen I	730	"	4	26.8.57
697	8.7.	V+R	Kunst, Göttingen II	1.800	hart.	5 + 1/4	5.8.57
698	8.7.	V+R	Gott. Gyl. Aug. 1/2	445	Broff.	9	13.8.57
699	8.7.	V+R	Reimer III	50	Broff.	22 1/4	1.8.57
700	10.7.	V+R	Markenstoff	965	ge	13 1/4	13.8.57
701	10.7.	V+R	Gis. Gyl. Göttingen	1496	ge	14 1/4	25.10.57
702	10.7.	V+R	Aufpferstoff B 1/2 off. per	1.000	hart.	5	29.7.57
703	10.7.	V+R	NTD 8,	1.098	"	10 1/2	5.9.57
704	10.7.	V+R	" 7,	1.089	"	15	3.9.57
705	10.7.	V+R	" 6	411	"	9	4.9.57
706	10.7.	V+R	" 4	598	"	18 1/2	4.9.57 3.9.57
707	10.7.	V+R	" 2	1.100	"	17 1/2	4.9.57 3.9.57
708	11.7.	V+R	Göttingen, Göttingen	2.105	Gyl.		
709	11.7.	V+R	Göttingen, Göttingen	515	br.	8	27.8.57
710	12.7.	Bücherei	Göttingen, Göttingen	1640	br.	8	10.8.57
711	13.7.	Garnaffensitz	Göttingen, Göttingen I	807	br.	4 1/2	12.8.57

Sample page from the Hubert & Co., Göttingen, printing company's order book, with the publishing house's publications from 1957.





From left to right: Gunhild Weigel, Gertrud Becker, Wilfred Becker, and Felix Weigel, probably on the occasion of a collection presentation, 1960s.

all the visits, exchanged ideas, and kept in constant contact by phone. Very soon I was traveling alone, sometimes for three months at a time, with the support of the 'home office' in Wiesbaden behind me, from where explanations, clarifications, and, if necessary, apologies for any errors that had occurred were sent to the customers according to my instructions."

## THE NEW MANAGEMENT: WILFRED BECKER – RICHARD DORN – FELIX WEIGEL

The death of Hans Harrassowitz in 1964 brought with it a reorganization of the company. Gertrud Harrassowitz held shares in the company and was happy to take part in the management of the company in an advisory capacity, sometimes also having the final say in matters. In addition to Wilfred Becker as general partner, Richard Dorn and Felix Weigel now completed the management team.

Wilfred Becker's (1895–1977) family came from Leipzig and arrived in Wiesbaden at the same time as their relatives Hans and Gertrud Harrassowitz. The Beckers had originally been in the banking business until Wilfred Becker's father purchased a manor near Leipzig and became a farmer. Like so many others, Wilfred Becker had to completely rearrange his life plans because of the war and took the opportunity to join the company because of his family ties to the Harrassowitz family. Having initially worked as an authorized signatory, he became a partner at Harrassowitz in 1956 and remained so until 1977. He took over responsibility for finance, accounting, and the publishing house and developed the corporate structures at the company, which underwent considerable changes over the years.

Richard Dorn (1906–1992) was born in Berlin on October 16, 1906, the second of three children, and spent his early childhood in Sweden. He attended high school in St. Gallen, Switzerland, and completed his training as a bookseller at the Basel publishing house Helbing und Lichtenhahn before taking a job at Hugendubel in Munich as an assistant. He had three children with his wife Marianne, née Schneider (1912–1999). His son Knut became his successor at Harrassowitz and worked closely with him from the 1960s onward. His daughter Gudula (born 1938) first completed an apprenticeship as a bookseller and assisted her father before deciding to study psychology and linguistics and to pursue a career in academia. The youngest of the children, Detlef (born 1945), after training as a bookseller, worked at the Harrassowitz company as head of human resources and logistics for many years. He was responsible for managing the complex leases in Taunusstrasse and then for the move to Wiesbaden-Erbenheim.

Richard loved to travel, which suited his job as the person responsible for the export business. He was cosmopolitan and had a special fondness for



The Dorn family in Leipzig, 1939 (still without Detlef); Knut Dorn (with dog).



Felix Weigel in office coat, 1950s.



Wilfred Becker Sr., 1960s.



the French language, which he mastered fluently, and for the French way of life. A lover of beautiful things, he collected maps and, unsurprisingly, books. One of his areas of interest was Goethe, on whom he collected a considerable private library over many decades. It can be admired today in the Casa di Goethe in Rome. In 1977, he was awarded the Federal Cross of Merit, an honor he was particularly pleased to receive because twenty of the most prominent American professors and library directors had applied to the German federal president for it. The Börsenverein des Deutschen Buchhandels honored Richard with the Dem Förderer des Deutschen Buches (Patron of German Books) plaque for more than twenty years of committee work. Richard stopped actively working at Harrassowitz in 1986.

The third member of the new, post-war Harrassowitz triumvirate, Felix Weigel (1928–2021), was the son of a trained bookseller, Emma Charlotte Elfriede Weigel, who was married to Theodor Oswald Weigel. Felix's grandfather was the owner of one of the leading scholarly antiquarian bookstores in Leipzig, whose holdings, sadly, fell victim to the flames on the night of December 4, 1943.

After the war, Felix applied to Harrassowitz for an apprenticeship as an antiquarian bookseller. The company did not want to hire him because it did not want to allow its own know-how to leak out and make its way to the competition. Felix, however, had the great fortune of getting an apprenticeship with the antiquarian Karl Markert, who had become independent again in 1945 after his time at Harrassowitz. The Weigel family did not want to open its business in the Soviet-occupied zone again, so Felix left for Kassel in 1948 as a retail bookseller and then finally was hired by Harrassowitz in Wiesbaden in 1949 as the leading antiquarian bookseller. There he also met up with his future wife again, Gunhild Scharlau, whom he already knew from the bookseller school in Leipzig. From 1962 to 1966, Felix was chairman of the board of the Vereinigung Deutscher Buchantiquare und Graphikhändler e.V. (Association of German Antiquarian Booksellers and Print Dealers), which was founded in 1949. From 1967 to 1970, he was chairman of the antiquarian working group in the Börsenverein. He retired in 1988.



A “just published” turns into a “just married” at this fair, Renate and Knut Dorn, 1971.

### **...AND THE FOLLOWING SECOND GENERATION**

It was not long before the second generation of the Becker and Dorn families joined the company: Wilfred Christoph Becker (1931–2019) actually wanted to study mathematics, but he then completed an apprenticeship as a bookseller in Marburg after the war, a career that greatly resonated with him as a book lover. He then gained professional experience in Frankfurt and Munich. After joining Harrassowitz, he was made an authorized signatory in 1963 and became a general partner in 1965. Together with his father, he was responsible for the commercial aspects of the company. It is at Harrassowitz that he also met his future wife, Christine, who was herself also a bookseller there. In the coming decades, it was primarily up to him to adapt the company’s structures to the changing business environment. Wilfred Becker retired in 1996.

Richard Dorn found his successor in his son Knut, born in 1936. After graduating from high school in Wiesbaden, Knut Dorn took American studies at the Johann Wolfgang von Goethe University in Frankfurt, which he completed in the mid-1960s with a dissertation on the playwright Eugene O'Neill. Parallel to writing his dissertation, Knut interned at numerous American libraries, all of which were Harrassowitz customers, and was seriously considering a career as a librarian in the United States. He was well received by the libraries, and the friendly connections lasted for decades. He remembers with a smile how every last third of the month he was regularly invited to dinner by the librarians and their families, because by then he had already exhausted the meager salary he received as an intern. However, when Richard Dorn became a partner at Harrassowitz in 1964, the course changed for Knut. His father was now able to offer him the prospect of following in his footsteps. And so began the close collaboration between father and son, who then joined the Harrassowitz management team in 1972. Knut Dorn met his future wife, Renate, née Quitzdorff (born 1942), at the company, where she worked as a foreign language secretary. When they got married, she had to give up her job though, as was Gertrud Harrassowitz's wish. Nevertheless, the company remained a part of the whole family's life, and Renate always supported and backed up Knut over the years. Immediately after the civil ceremony, the young couple traveled directly to the United States for an important trade fair.

We have already spoken of Knut's countless and lengthy trips, often accompanied by his wife and later their two daughters, Nadja and Claudia. In 1971, he was appointed to the Foreign Trade Committee and in 1976 to the Börsenverein's Committee for Bibliography and Library Issues.

Like his father, Knut is a passionate collector. He had already collected stamps in his early youth and earned pocket money with them. In the following decades, maps, wine, and, of course, books followed. Meanwhile, his Thomas Mann collection occupies three floors. In 2011, Dr. Knut Dorn retired, and he now devotes himself exclusively to his passions, which include traveling and an interest in ancient cultures, as well as his two granddaughters. He had started out his career with modesty and great diligence. A favorite phrase on trips was "sausages on benches"; then, you could move on quickly and make your money last. He steadily built good professional—as well as personal—relationships with the librarians he served. Knut Dorn has received great recognition for this from professional circles since his retirement.



## SPECIAL COLLECTION AREAS

In the long history of Harrassowitz, there have always been unusual orders from libraries for so-called “special collection areas.” Otto Harrassowitz already had received such requests, as his son Hans reported: “The store was not usually commissioned with the simple procurement of books, but in particular lists of hard-to-find desiderata, which other colleagues had already tried to find in vain. Many a hard nut has meanwhile been cracked, receiving laudatory acknowledgments in letters from scholars and libraries with pride.”

One example is the extensive collection of political propaganda material created during the First World War for the University of Chicago.

Not long after Knut Dorn started working for Harrassowitz in 1964, he received a very special request: Several institutes and university departments in the United States showed interest in the so-called “1968 movement” in West Germany. Knut was therefore sent to Frankfurt University at the end of the 1960s in a T-shirt and jeans to collect relevant flyers.

These special collection areas evolved over time to Approval Plans. Today, the company’s customers can define additional special collection areas at any time and include them in their profile. These are often assignments to collect material on specific personalities: Ludwig van Beethoven, William Shakespeare, and Friedrich Nietzsche are examples. Other inquiries relate to contemporary historical events such as German reunification, globalization, mountaineering, and Swiss–Russian relations. These may also concern special forms of publication such as gray literature, private prints, and other works, usually produced in very small editions, outside of regular publishing production. In addition, a collection order can also focus on very specific research topics and issues, such as “waste disposal in space.”

Today, Harrassowitz can take special collection areas into account when recording titles, and the corresponding keywords can be assigned to the publications right away.



The Harrassowitz company's headquarters from 1958 to 2003 in Taunusstrasse in Wiesbaden.

The aim of the two acquisition bosses, Richard and Knut Dorn, was to offer customers the best possible service and to establish a “reputation of excellence” for the company. The decision to develop Harrassowitz from a scholarly bookseller for German-language publications into a library agent for European scholarly publications was in line with this. After all, it had already become apparent since the First World War that the German language would increasingly be replaced by English as the lingua franca in academia.

The preferred advertising medium for the export range was initially the catalog. The focus was on the collection of new scholarly publications and available publications on various subject areas. These catalogs have been distributed to Harrassowitz customers as the *German Book Digest* for many decades.

In addition to the business travel undertaken by Richard Dorn and his son Knut on the North American continent, one of the overseas offices

of the Library of Congress by now had been established in Germany at Harrassowitz in 1966. As in many places in Europe, employees here were paid by the Library of Congress to acquire book literature of importance for research from both parts of Germany and later also the Swiss area, to catalog it, and to provide it with property stamps before it was sent out. Other institutions joined this project. The program, called the Title II Program—later, National Program for Acquisitions and Cataloging (NPAC)—continued into the late 1970s. When it ended, Harrassowitz took on all the employees and called the new department Blanket Order, now called Approval Plans. As digitalization progressed, the registering of titles for the Harrassowitz catalogs could now also be used for the Approval Plan. The standardized library slip could be supplied at the same time for each selected title, an attractive service for librarians.

### **MUSIC DEPARTMENT**

Europe, and especially Germany, is home to the world's most important and largest music publishers, so it made sense to get involved in this area as well. However, music scores have significant differences from monographs or continuations and therefore require special expertise from the staff responsible for this segment. In order to be able to offer a first-class service, Harrassowitz founded its own department for music books in 1969, in which musicologists and employees specially trained for the music book trade processed customers' orders. In addition to regular orders, the music department also relied on the Approval Plan concept and created detailed acquisition profiles for library customers with their greatly varied collection focuses. Harrassowitz, for example, helped to build the largest collection of contemporary music scores in North America.

Another focus of the music department is composers' collected editions as well as sheet music published in series. The special Harrassowitz music catalogs, which also list publication schedules for collected editions and music series, are very popular with music libraries. These are often issues that will not appear until years or even decades later. The five catalogs—“*Composers' Collected Editions from Europe*,” “*Monuments of Music from Europe*,” “*Early Music*,” “*New Classical Music*,” and “*Music Facsimiles in Series*”—are updated regularly and cover a wide spectrum of European sheet music publications. By now, they have long since been transferred to the online application Fokus.



## **SPATIAL EXPANSION**

All these new tasks meant that more space was required. When the company finally moved into Taunusstrasse 5 in 1958, the time of provisional arrangements was over. Harrassowitz had in fact found its home for the next 45 years in downtown Wiesbaden, and the location proved to be quite flexible over the years. The flourishing company's increasing need for more space was met by renting floors in the neighboring buildings. Whenever an apartment became available in one of these buildings, the firewall was knocked through and a connection was created between the buildings. However, the houses all had different levels, and all the apartments on one floor could not always be rented. As a result, the layout was something of a labyrinth at Harrassowitz. The sometimes-long distances within the building required a good knowledge of the location and gave some workplaces a very unique touch and a charm all their own. Visitors always had to be picked up at the reception desk and taken to the respective offices; they would have inevitably gotten lost on their own.



Taunusstrasse 5 in the 1990s.



Under one roof: the sales warehouse moves to Taunusstrasse, 1960s.



It gets crowded on Taunusstrasse during social occasions; Wilfred Becker Senior giving a speech, 1960s.



ABBILDUNG 1: 'Uweh' aus No. 128 (Originalgrösse)

One special cause for celebration in 1966 is the publication of the 500th antiquarian book catalog. It contains selected Turkish, Persian, and Arabic manuscripts from the 14th to 19th centuries.

## FAIRS, CONFERENCES, AND EXHIBITIONS

In addition to catalogs, it is direct contact with customers that has played a significant role for the company from the very beginning. Opportunities for this arise on the occasion of academic conferences, trade fairs, and meetings of librarian associations.

A book fair had been held regularly in Leipzig since 1720. But since 1825 and the founding of the Börsenverein, its significance had shifted from a trade fair to a meeting and general assembly of German booksellers. Otto Harrassowitz did not get to witness a book fair held in Leipzig during his lifetime, but there were repeated attempts to organize one with international appeal. As already mentioned, Otto was involved in the Deutscher Buchgewerbeverein (German Book Trade Association), which organized the International Exhibition of Book and Graphic Arts in Leipzig in 1914, called Bugra. The publishing house participated in the Leipzig Book Publishers' special exhibition in the German Book Trade main hall with the large booth number 27, which was prominently located right next to one of the main Bugra building's two Courts of Honor.

Even before the World Book and Graphic Exhibition, as the Bugra was also called, the association had participated in various world exhibitions with special shows. After the First World War, it organized the book trade Bugra, or Bugra Book Fairs, as part of the Leipzig Sample Fair from 1919 to 1928, which took place at Peterstrasse 38 in the Messepalast with as many as 300 exhibitors. A letter of invitation for such an exhibition from Hans Harrassowitz to the librarian of Yale University in 1927 has survived, including the booking of a hotel room. According to Hans Harrassowitz, 400 American publications were also on display.

As the business improved its standing in the United States, more and more American events were added to the Harrassowitz calendar. There had already been talk of American Library Association (ALA) conferences. Even though it was not possible for Otto Harrassowitz to personally travel to the United States and participate, his son Hans took advantage of these opportunities until the outbreak of the Second World War made it no longer possible.

Since the 1980s, Harrassowitz has regularly participated in the twice-yearly American Library Association (ALA) conferences, held for a week at a time in various major American cities. As many as 30,000 librarians meet there. There are also a number of other fairs relevant to specialized areas in



Bugra's main building, 1914.



Book presentation by Harrassowitz on the occasion of the Orientalist Congress in Munich in 1957.





International Orientalist Congress in Ann Arbor in Munich; Felix Weigel at the Harrassowitz booth, 1967.

librarianship—for example, medicine, art, and theology—and the International Association of Music Librarians (IAML) Congress, which is held annually in a different part of the world. On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of this conference in 2001 in Périgueux in southwestern France, Harrassowitz made its first appearance in the conference with its own stand, which was so well received that it has been a regular presence there ever since. The Frankfurt Book Fair is also a fixed date in the company's calendar.

And while the COVID-19 pandemic has made in-person attendance at many conferences and trade fairs temporarily impossible or prohibited, one thing is certain: personal contact with its customers will continue to be of great importance to Harrassowitz in the future.

## 100 YEARS OF A “BRIDGE TO THE WORLD”

In 1972, Harrassowitz celebrated the company’s 100th birthday and received the Golden Plaque of the City of Wiesbaden on this occasion. The gathering started at the grave of Hans Harrassowitz, where Richard Dorn said a few words in memory of the man who had died merely eight years earlier. Afterward, the staff celebrated the day with a boat excursion down the Rhine. In the commemoration in the *Börsenblatt*, Harrassowitz was described as a “Bridge to the World” by Sigfred Taubert, then director of the Frankfurt Book Fair.

At this time, the company had about 270 employees and four managing partners, one of whom, as of that year, was Dr. Knut Dorn, who was responsible for library services. He was unable to attend the anniversary celebration, however, because he was once again on a long trip in the United States. After stops in New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Illinois, and Missouri, he attended the American Library Association (ALA) Annual Conference in Chicago, on the occasion of which Harrassowitz presented an exhibition of works on books and librarianship.

The American market had now become the business focus. Former University of Tennessee librarian Jane Maddox was able to convince Knut to establish a service office in the United States in 1975. She and her husband, Lorne Kenyon, became the first two Library Consultants North America for Harrassowitz and moved into an office in Maryland. Today, Harrassowitz’s North American Library Services Office has grown to employ more staff and is located in Mobile, Alabama. Conversely, many American librarians still do not miss the opportunity to visit Harrassowitz in Wiesbaden on their trips to Europe. They often stay in the Dorn family’s guest room.

### “TRUST AND EXCELLENCE”

In 1982, Harrassowitz celebrated 100 years of a good business relationship with Harvard University. At a ceremony, James Henry Spohrer, Librarian





Embarkation for the 100th anniversary celebration: Christine and Wilfred Christoph Becker and employees.

THE NEWBERRY LIBRARY.							10
Where Published	Wm. No. Vol.	Size	Pages	Binding	Of Whom Printed	Price	
Chicago	1854	1	121	442	cl.	John W. Wells, Chicago, Ill.	4 50
Park	1857-1812	25	47		J. W. Newcomb, Chicago, Ill.	30 00	
Annals	1846	1	8"	2018	alp.	James P. Hays, New York	1 50
Memphis	1852-54	3	8"	854	paper		10 00
Philadelphia	1857	1	121	304	cl.		75
New York	1870	1	8"	620			1 50
St. Louis	1872	1	8"	362	cl.		1 00
New York	1873	1	16"	813	cl.		1 00
Philadelphia	1855	1	8"	200	cl.		1 50
New York	1854	2	8"				3 00
Albany	1866	1	8"	609			2 00
Philadelphia	1812	1	8"	611	cl.		2 50
London	1832	1	16"	109	cl.		1 00
	1823	1	8"	304	cl.		1 50
New York	1861	2	8"				8 00
Chicago	1850	1	115	300			1 00
Pittsburgh	1855	1	121	242			1 00
Albany	1831	1	8"	419	alp.		2 00
Philadelphia	1812	1	8"	191	cl.		5 00
Albany	1847	1	8"	104	cl.		4 00
Boston	1875	1	8"	666			2 00
Barnstable	1812	1	8"	44	alp.		1 50
Boston	1792	1	8"	243	cl.		5 00
Whitely	1857	1	8"	416	cl.		5 00
Philadelphia	1857	1	8"	532	cl.		1 00
	1854	2	8"				2 50
	1854	2	4"				9 50
Boston	1857	2	4"	100		John W. Wells, New York, Ill. Gift	20 00
Albany	1850-52	2	8"			Wm. H. Hays, New York	366 10
	1812-1813	20	4"				2045
	1850-51	5	16"				2045
	1824-31	24	4"				2045
	1825	1	4"	871			2045
Brown	1852-55	2	8"				2840
Regensburg	1856	1	8"	404			21 30
Moscow for	1860-61	2	8"				43 50
Albany	1860	3	2				204
Boston	1857-59	7	4"				204
Philly	1824-28	2	4"				204
Albany	1852	1	8"	474			12 30

Such a long customer relationship can be described as something very special: the first order from the Newberry Library 100 years ago can be celebrated in 1986, on September 24, to the day.



On the occasion of its 100th birthday, the Harrassowitz company journal is published...with mail from all over the world that always arrived.

of the German Collection at the University of California at Berkeley, delivered a tribute speech to the company, recalling their long collaboration. What is particularly appreciated about Harrassowitz, he remarked, is the company's absolute reliability. Anything ordered is delivered despite the most adverse circumstances. As a young librarian, he noted in a later document, he himself received a letter from Harrassowitz in 1983 informing him that a publication on Indo-European linguistics that had been announced for the 1940s was now available and asking whether he wanted to confirm the order. Like all of his colleagues, he appreciated the German partner's "exceptional high standard" and the "world standard of quality."

In January 1989, a remarkable article appeared in the *Journal of Academic Librarianship*. In it, the author reported on a meeting in Charleston in 1988 on "Issues in Book and Serials Acquisition," at which a panelist stated with conviction that there was only one excellent book-and-serials supplier in the entire world, namely Harrassowitz. And he also explained why: Both Richard and Knut Dorn, as well as their American representatives, are considered to be absolutely trustworthy people. They work hard for their good reputation, and they make librarians feel like more than just a number on a customer account.

#### **THE HARRASSOWITZ PUBLISHING HOUSE**

In 1974, the historian Dr. Helmut Petzolt took over the management of the Harrassowitz Publishing House and further expanded the range of study, languages, and textbooks. One milestone was the commission agreement with the Herzog August Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel from 1984 onward, which consolidated the academic book publishing focus further and introduced the Early Modern period to the program at the same time. The Eastern European History and Slavic Studies segments were also strengthened.

In 1992, his successor Michael Langfeld became the first theologian to take the helm of the publishing house. The restructuring of universities in the new German federal states after reunification created a wide range of publishing opportunities. There was a strong demand for up-to-date and non-ideological specialist literature, and these winds of change were reflected in new book series, journals, and textbooks. Shortly after the turn of the millennium, Oriental studies experienced a further resurgence when the Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft (German Oriental Society, DMG) partnered with Harrassowitz for its book series and journal.

The literary and linguistic scholar Dr. Barbara Krauß has been at the helm of the publishing house since 2007. The Harrassowitz Publishing House became a reliable cooperation partner for further important academic societies, associations, university institutes, academies, and libraries whose book series it published. In 2007, collaboration with the Deutsche Orient-Gesellschaft (German Oriental Society, DOG) began, strengthening the field of archeology in the publishing house. This publishing focus was further promoted by a close cooperation since 2015–2016 with the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut (German Archaeological Institute) and its branch offices in Athens, Cairo, Madrid, and Rome.

In addition to the Herzog August Bibliothek, the Francke Foundations in Halle are an important commission partner for the cultural history of the 17th and 18th centuries. In 2013, Harrassowitz became the exclusive publishing company for the renowned *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, a time-honored institution which, since its founding in 1819 by Karl vom und zum Stein, has made it its task to index and edit medieval text sources and to contribute to academic research in German and European history through critical studies.

Since 2011, the Harrassowitz Publishing House and the editors of its *Philippika* series have supported young scholars with the annual Philippika Prize for outstanding dissertations in ancient studies. This is another indication of the publisher's commitment to the academic community.

In 2021, Dr. Barbara Krauß handed over the reins of the publishing house to the classical archaeologist and ancient historian Stephan Specht.

## NEW MANAGEMENT

With the death of Gertrud Harrassowitz (1892–1983), the name Harrassowitz disappeared from the list of owners. But the company remained family oriented, and the next generation of the families who have become a part of the business's history stepped up to fill the big shoes of their seniors.

Ruth Becker–Scheicher (born 1961) is the third generation to follow. Ruth practically grew up with the company that her grandfather and father were already associated with. Vacation jobs at Harrassowitz had been a matter of course since her school days. She made the decision to join the company while she was still a student. In 1990, she joined the company as a general partner and initially took over the commercial management and responsibility for the publishing house together with her father (until 2020). Since 2014, she has also been responsible for data processing.

The Dorn family also contributed to the sense of continuity. In 2003, Claudia Dorn (born 1978) joined the company after graduating in American Studies and worked in the area of customer service for both Europe and the United States. Again, two generations traveled successfully together. But then Claudia's successful participation in a Green Card Lottery gave her the opportunity to live her American dream, so she left Harrassowitz and Germany in 2013.

Dr. Nadja Dorn–Lange (born 1975) also accompanied her father on many trips to America and other places during her childhood. She still remembers well her first steps in Taunusstrasse and the many Saturdays on which the large boxes had to be brought there from the main post office—the family's weekend outing! The long, winding hallways, deserted on weekends, were ideal for playing hide-and-seek while Dad had some work to do. After her studies in human medicine, she married Jan N. Lange (born 1977) and gave birth to two daughters, Lavina and Helena. Nadja joined the company in 2008. Nadja became an authorized signatory in 2009 and managing director in 2011. Her responsibilities focused on human resources and logistics, as well as publishing from 2020. During the COVID-19 pandemic in particular, she could effectively apply her medical background to providing information to employees and to in-house processes.

Friedemann Weigel (born 1958), the son of Felix Weigel, grew up in the Taunus region. After graduating from high school, he initially worked at Harrassowitz for a year. His primary interest, however, was more in medicine,



Knut and Claudia Dorn together with Justin Clarke on the occasion of a trade fair in the United States, 2007.



Drinks on Taunusstrasse, from left to right: Wilfred Christoph Becker, Richard Dorn, Ruth Becker-Scheicher and Knut Dorn, 1990s.



Friedemann Weigel, 1999.





On the road together for Harrassowitz: (from left to right) Monika Schneider, Monika Johannbroer, Knut Dorn, Nadja Dorn-Lange, and Renate Dorn. Traveling to the IAML conference in Périgueux, 2001.

so he trained as a nursing assistant during his community service. His second talent was business, so he ultimately decided to study business administration in Hamburg. He quickly realized that the future would lie in information technology (IT), so it was no coincidence that he found one of his first jobs at an IT consulting firm in Wiesbaden. When the IT department at Harrassowitz was to be set up and expanded, that excited him far more than his bookselling beginnings.

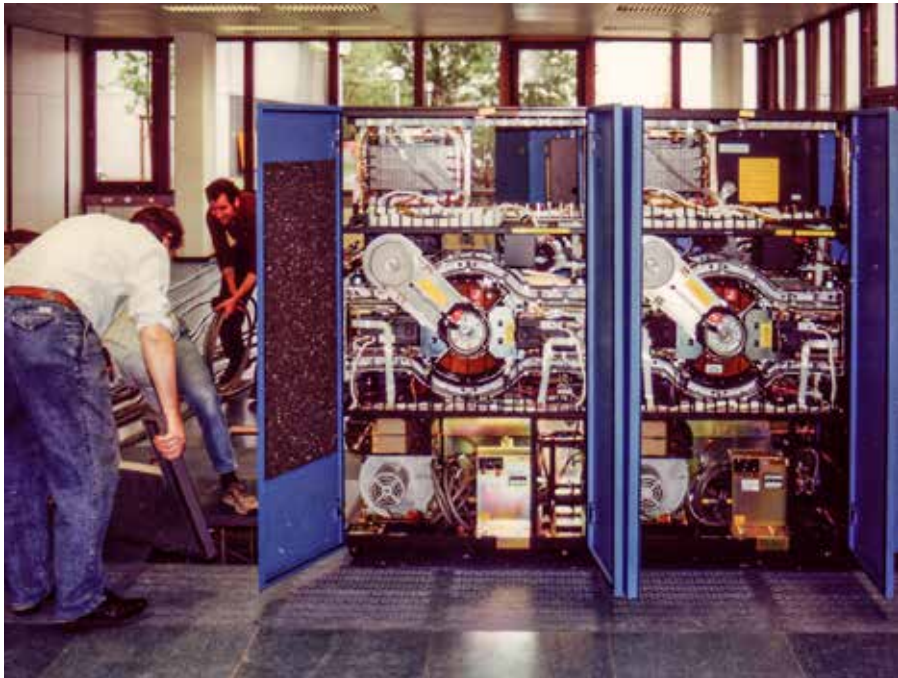
For twenty years, Friedemann Weigel was in charge of IT as managing director. Following Knut Dorn's departure from the company, he was also responsible for the journals and sales divisions. At the end of 2021, he stepped down as managing director. After that, his son Sebastian Weigel (born 1989) temporarily took over his duties, but he will withdraw from the operational business at the end of 2022 to focus on new activities outside Harrassowitz.

But the relationship of the three families to the company and their influence on business development at Harrassowitz was ensured for the future. The Harrassowitz Family Advisory Board was established in 2021 to carry on the impressive family continuity. Through their work in management and this advisory board, the Becker, Dorn, and Weigel families still influence the company's fortunes and successfully continue Harrassowitz's history as a medium-sized family business.





Stock book of bibliographic records in the Asia and Orient department, 1960s.



Relocation of the Harrassowitz computer center in the 1990s.

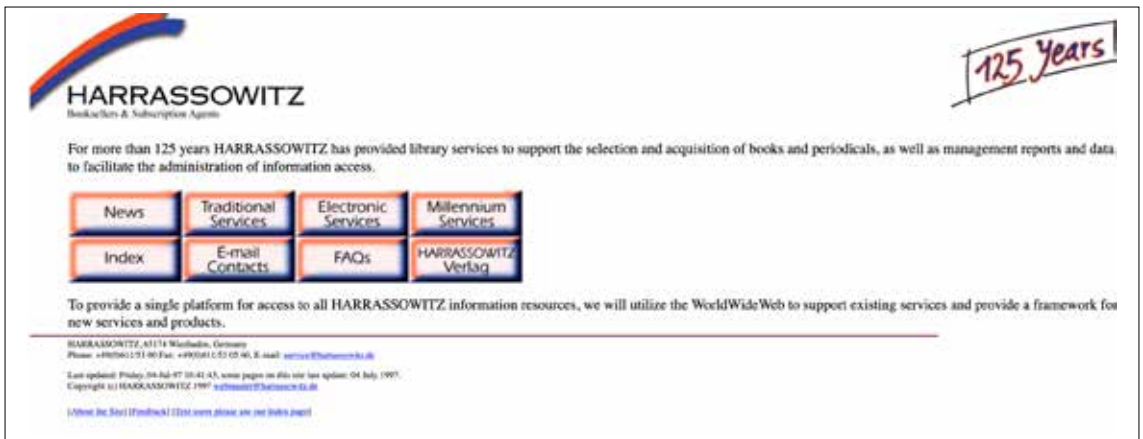
## THE MODERNIZATION OF A COMPANY

When Friedemann Weigel became a shareholder in 1986, he took over responsibility for the company's data processing and thus also for the digitalization of the business. At this time, the telephone and letters, the still fairly new fax, and the telex, which had already been in use since the 1930s, were the means of choice for communication. Knut Dorn remembers always being "the captain's best friend" on his fairly frequent voyages to the United States, because the captain had the only fax on board.

The computer age had already begun at Harrassowitz in the 1970s, when the first DOS system was installed on IBM computers. Harrassowitz was using an IBM/370, whose user interface was purely character based, and everything was still very expensive. At this time, IBM PCs were only used as better typewriters at secretarial workstations and did not yet influence the company's actual workflow. However, in 1989, on the occasion of the American Library Association (ALA) Annual Conference in Washington, D.C., Harrassowitz surprised its customers. For the first time, a product was presented on CD-ROM on a specially rented IBM computer. It was a medical journal equipped with an application for full text search. This made one thing clear: Harrassowitz was not overwhelmed by the technical innovations in the book trade and library sector but was actively shaping the digitalization process in the industry and incorporating its expertise into various developments.

### **BOOKS, JOURNALS, AND DATA**

Books are complex products, and a first automation step at Harrassowitz was the storage of the publication entry—i.e., a book's product description—on magnetic cards in the Asia and Orient department as early as the 1960s. Using electric typewriters equipped with a special reader for these storage media, the text could then be reproduced over and over again, on invoices and purchase orders or as a catalog template. The contents of all the magnetic cards were printed out and compiled into a multivolume bound copy so that the publication information was always available.



Harrassowitz website in 1997, the year of its 125th anniversary.

Before there was an Internet-based data exchange between libraries and publishing systems on the one hand and Harrassowitz's system on the other, Knut Dorn always returned home from his trips to the United States with well-filled suitcases. In these were the expensive magnetic storage disks containing the information he took to and from the customers.

The idea of establishing a standard for exchanging machine-readable product description data was discussed among U.S. librarians as early as the 1980s. The American National Standards Institute (ANSI), founded in 1972, adopted the first data transmission standard between different computers in 1982.

Before this, librarians often had to spend weeks recording new publications in the annual process of renewing their journal subscriptions. It took six to eight weeks for publications purchased from Harrassowitz alone. Harvard Library was one of the first U.S. libraries to be able to transmit its bibliographic information over the Internet, starting in 1995, at a time when everyone else was still exchanging data by magnetic tape.

Bibliographic data also played a crucial role in the field of monographs and Approval Plans. The following are a few figures that illustrate the selection and publication recording work that the company is doing in these areas: Of the approximately 80,000 new German-language titles published each year, around 20,000 are of interest to the company's customers. Their data are all entered into the Harrassowitz system that is made available to libraries online.

The principle of acquisition in the country of origin had been changing since the 1980s. The increasing globalization of scholarly publishing was becoming particularly noticeable in the field of journals. More and

more German and European publishers were setting up subsidiaries, especially in English-speaking countries. Therefore, after 1990, the company's management made the strategic decision to offer international journal subscriptions. This required a significant organizational change in the journals department. It proved to be a huge advantage that Harrassowitz relied on internal application development from the very beginning when digitizing its workflows. Workflows could be further developed very flexibly by adapting or reprogramming the working environment. This also allowed for completely new offers in terms of customer services.

Another decision was not so easy: Due to changing times, the traditional antiquarian bookstore and Asia–Orient department closed their doors. Catalogs were no longer issued, and the stock was gradually sold off. However, customers were still to be supplied with series and all accessible publications in this area.

#### **OTTOSERIALS AND OTTOEDITIONS**

One important step for the company's service offer was the introduction of OttoSerials in 1994, a database that initially displayed all journals offered through Harrassowitz via the Internet with the help of a Telnet protocol from as early as July 1995. Germany got its first Internet provider in 1994, and Harrassowitz obtained its first IP address. The company's first email address was `harrassowitz@eunet.de`. The first Harrassowitz website was launched in December 1996. Visitors to the website were greeted with: "Welcome to the European Web-Site for Libraries!" The website promised customers easy access to all areas through a single platform.

In 1996, Harrassowitz served more than 3,000 library customers in the United States, of which one hundred institutions applied for access to the Harrassowitz online system with the bibliography, ordering, complaints, and billing functions it offered. More than 240 user IDs were activated. For American customers in particular, online access to their data was a huge advantage, because they could now view and process their transactions, regardless of the business hours in Germany and without the need to take the time difference into account. From 1997, OttoSerials could be accessed directly through the World Wide Web using OttoConnect. OttoSerials was continuously developed in the years ahead. Libraries could now create their specific profile in it and track all the information about their electronic resources.

In 1998, the IT team started to better prepare the company for the coming Internet age. In 1999, the company launched OttoEditions, an on-line search and ordering system that now also made monographs and music scores accessible. From then on, all bibliographic data—sorted according to specific collection areas—was entered into the Harrassowitz system to make it available to library customers online. This meant that the catalog as an advertising medium was finally replaced by digital solutions.

From 2007, OttoEditions has linked the customer accounts directly to the respective online catalog for the customer's library. This enables the librarian to immediately see whether their library already owns a publication. Version 2.0 of OttoEditions went online in 2011, with more features and improved display, now also supporting the management of e-books with the database for the first time. The special terms and conditions for procuring e-books were also the subject matter of a pilot project that Harrassowitz conducted in 2013 together with a German academic publisher and a large American library. From then on, the bibliographic data that Harrassowitz creates has also been included in WorldCat, the world's largest bibliographic database.

## THE 2000s

Harrassowitz entered the new millennium without fear. All systems passed the dreaded Y2K hurdle unscathed. The company started the process of changing from the previously used IBM mainframe to a client-server system. And last but not least, the newly designed [www.harrassowitz.de](http://www.harrassowitz.de) website was launched.

### **MOVE TO THE ERBENHEIM CAMPUS**

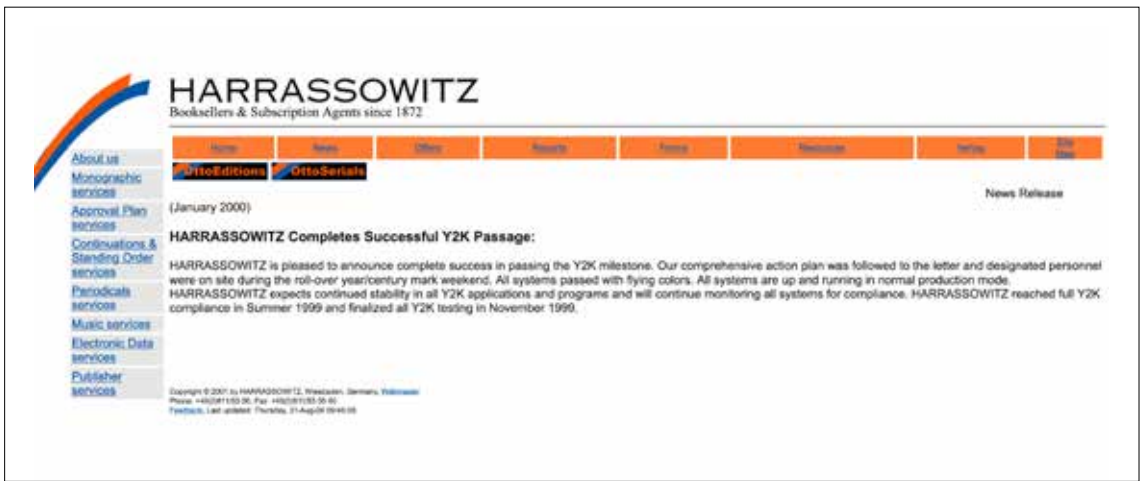
In 2003, it was with mixed emotions that the company said goodbye to its home in Taunusstrasse, which had grown over the decades along with the company.

What definitely was not missed, however, were the twenty-four bathtubs in the four houses over which the business premises were spread. Nor did anyone mourn the sometimes very cramped workspaces or the increasingly difficult delivery of books. The differences in levels on the floors, which were very difficult to navigate with the book carts, now also became a thing of the past—not to mention the protected bats in the underground parking garage and the fact that the power for the workstation computers at Harrassowitz always went out when the tanning salon on the first floor was using all the tanning beds at the same time.

What was missing from the new location were the downtown lunch stops, the chestnut blossoms out front, and the fountain in the green space across the street—or quite simply, the charming atmosphere and flair of academia that had settled on the place, as an American journalist visiting Harrassowitz once described it.

But on the other hand, the new building on Kreuzberger Ring could be designed to suit the needs of the company and its employees; for instance, a perfect workflow was implemented for the delivery of goods and processing of incoming goods. And the technical and structural specifications for IT were also met. All workstations were designed to be absolutely flexible in terms of data processing and communications technology and were interconnected by a high-performance network. The Internet connection was





Harrassowitz website in 2001.



"Farewell to the old and arrival of the new" T-shirt for the move, 2003.



During construction...



...and after moving in.

very fast, and finally the data center with central computing and data storage technology could also be brought into the new building. Harrassowitz finally moved to Wiesbaden-Erbenheim on October 3, 2003.

**ISO CERTIFICATION**

To further develop the high quality standards at Harrassowitz, the company management decided to introduce a certified quality management system in 2007. It was not so much the certification itself as it was the path to obtaining it that proved very beneficial to Harrassowitz. Together with

## CUSTOMER TESTIMONIALS

The considerable amount of positive customer feedback confirms the success of this approach:

*“I’m writing for no reason other than to thank you for all that you do for us, and to let you know that we’re still enjoying Fokus.”*

*“The consistent excellence Harrassowitz delivers is unparalleled. I’m not sure how you foster such a culture, but I hope someday you’ll write a book about it so the rest of us can learn from your mastery.”*

*“I want to say Thank You! overall for the wonderful service all of you at Harrassowitz provide us with (this example, above and beyond!). We are so sure of your service that we can take it for granted, so I just want to make sure that we acknowledge you and all your colleagues to show how much you are appreciated.”*

*“...Allow me to say that it is always a pleasure doing business with Harrassowitz, as your sage assistance here has confirmed once again. Your firm’s attention to these details is indeed unparalleled. Thank you.”*

*“I have been a serials librarian for 40 years, and Harrassowitz is, by far, the best serials agent I ever worked with!”*

*“It is truly a pleasure to work with everyone at Harrassowitz. Every single person I work with at Harrassowitz is always extremely professional, and the quality of the service I receive is always excellent. You all make my life as a Serials Supervisor a lot easier! Thank you so much.”*

an external consulting firm, the company management put the company itself and its management structures under a microscope. The scrutiny the company was put under yielded some very pleasant findings, namely that the basic principles of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), such as continuous improvement and process orientation, had been practiced at the company for a long time. Not only that, but where need for improvement was identified, such as in the consistent documentation of internal processes, this was quickly dealt with.

The implementation process ended with the ISO 9001:2000 certification and ongoing recertification; by now, the company's quality management system is certified according to ISO 9001:2015. This certifies the continuously high standard of Harrassowitz's internal management system. The company management understands the requirements of the standard and uses them in this context as an incentive to rethink its own strategic considerations.

#### **HERMIS PROJECT**

Publishers' e-journal offers continued to grow as the 21st century began, as did the customers' interest in these electronic products. Many switched to purchasing e-publications. Harrassowitz actively responded to this development and launched the HERMIS (*Harrassowitz Electronic Resource Management and Information Solutions*) project in 2004. Working with two U.S. librarians, the project identified "pain points" at libraries and looked for useful services to help them work through these still fairly new acquisition processes.

The first two project stages, HERMIS 1.0 and 2.0, were internal development stages. HERMIS 3.0 was then launched to the outside world in 2005. The service offer supported academic libraries in managing electronic resources, license management, ordering, and all billing issues. Despite all the automation, though, the possibility of directly contacting Harrassowitz employees has always remained, and it is this accessibility and approachability that customers particularly value.

With the rapid development of e-journals, publishers are now seeking direct contact with libraries. However, it has been shown time and again that the tasks involved in managing e-journals are so complex that the involvement of a journal agency remains crucial for both libraries and publishers, to ensure that subscription management works well. To name just a few important points from the service portfolio: Harrassowitz offers



## The Project

*Parker on the Web is the product of a partnership between Corpus Christi College and Stanford University.*

**CORPUS CHRISTI COLLEGE** was founded in 1352. It bears the distinction of being the only college in Oxford or Cambridge to have been founded by local citizens. Its greatest benefactor was the one time Corpus undergraduate and later Archbishop of Canterbury, Matthew Parker, whose library, still today, is the pride of the college. The College continues its work of education and high-level research. It is one of the smaller colleges in Cambridge.

**STANFORD UNIVERSITY** was founded in 1885. Ever since its beginning high priority was given to the development of library collections. Today, placing a strong emphasis on effective use of digital as well as paper resources, the Stanford University Libraries & Academic Information Resources is a global leader in embracing new technologies and services in pursuit of excellence in teaching, learning, and research.

**CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY** whose Imaging Service is charged by Corpus with the digital photography for Parker on the Web, is one of the oldest institutions in the University of Cambridge. For more than 600 years it has been central to the support of teaching and research at Cambridge, and a major resource for scholars around the world. Since 1710 the Library has been a legal deposit library, entitled to claim a copy of every book and periodical published in Great Britain and Ireland.



*The Parker Library at Corpus Christi College in Cambridge*



*St. Dunstan, Archbishop of Canterbury  
Canterbury or Rochester, late 12 c.  
Lives of Saints CCCC, MS 161, f. 1r*

## Distribution

**OTTO HARRASSOWITZ GmbH & Co. KG** was named the sole distributor for Parker on the Web. **HARRASSOWITZ** is a book and serials vendor for the academic and research library community, specializing in the distribution of scholarly books, periodicals, e-resources, and music scores. Founded in 1872 in Leipzig, the company soon gained international acceptance in the academic library market. It was moved to Wiesbaden after World War II, from where it serves its customers worldwide, with a special emphasis on quality service.

For further information about Parker on the Web please contact **HARRASSOWITZ** at [service@harrassowitz.de](mailto:service@harrassowitz.de)  
**OTTO HARRASSOWITZ GmbH & Co. KG**  
65174 Wiesbaden, Germany  
Tel: + 49 (0) 611 530-0  
Fax: + 49 (0) 611 530-560

In 2009, Stanford University appoints Harrassowitz as the sole worldwide distributor for Parker Library on the Web, the electronic access to the collection of medieval manuscripts at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge.

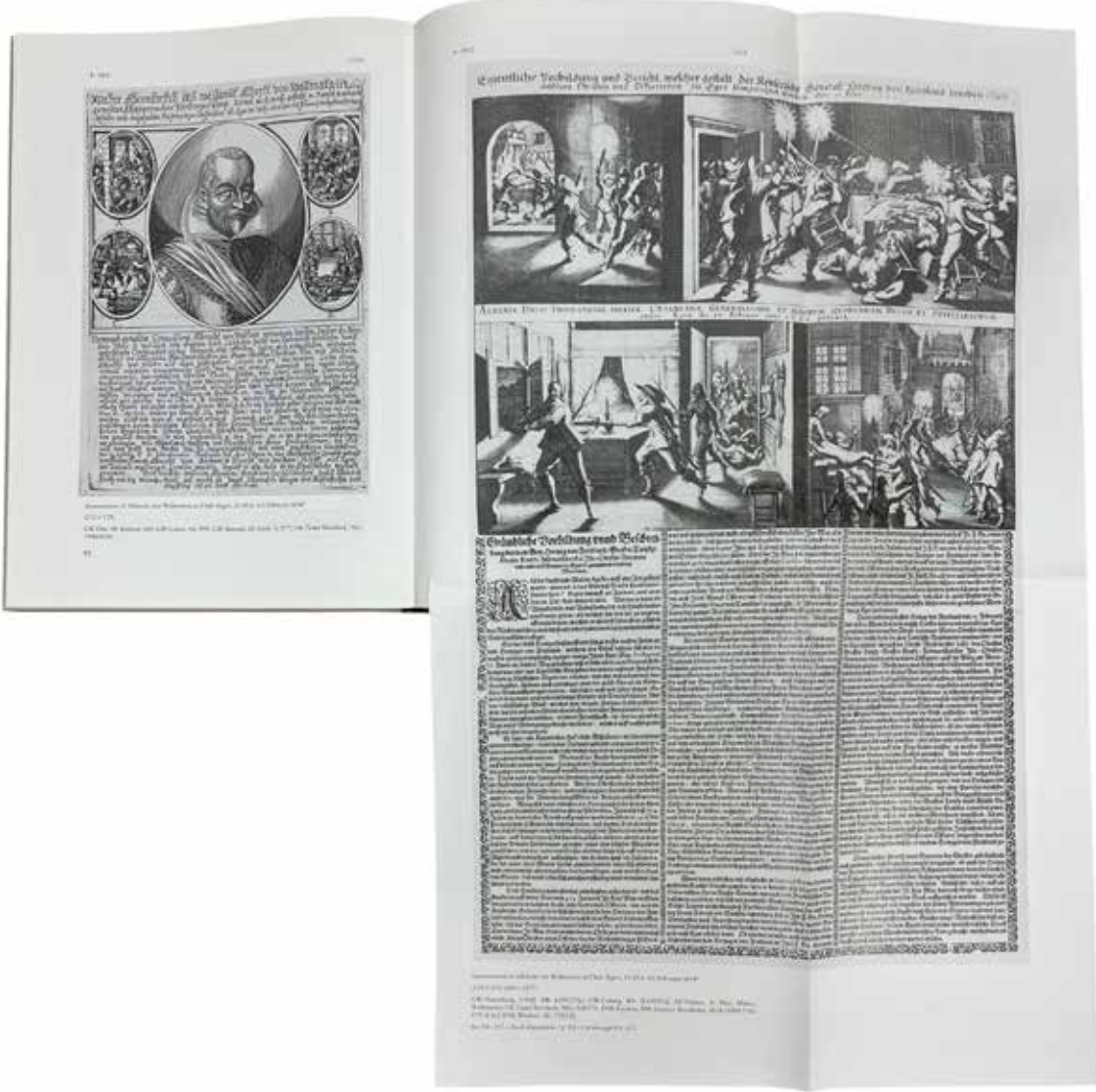
professional support for the complex license agreements, the time-consuming renewal process for journal subscriptions, resource management, and the administration of access rights. Harrassowitz has also developed a new service, the E-Stats service, which puts usage in relation to acquisition price, to help libraries make acquisition decisions. A more recent development is Fokus Online Renewal Management, which simplifies the renewal process by structuring it more clearly for customers, thereby supporting budget planning. All processes, information, and data can be made available to customers in real time. Harrassowitz is thus becoming a service provider for libraries, publishers, and increasingly also consortia, and it is establishing itself as an indispensable partner for a smooth process to acquire e-journal packages.

The company is also constantly coming up with new ideas and offers in the area of monographs that make the daily work of its customers, academic librarians, easier. In cooperation with two industry partners, Harrassowitz has been offering “shelf-ready” delivery since 2012. Ordered monographs can now be delivered shelf-ready, meaning they are equipped with barcode labels, bookplates, date and ownership stamps, a machine-readable publication record in MARC format, security strips, and RFIDs.

## JOURNAL CRISIS AND BIG DEALS

Prices for journals, especially in the fields of science, technology, and medicine, have been rising steadily year after year since the 1990s. At the same time, library purchasing budgets are being cut, often leading to subscription cancellations. The publishers then compensate for these cancellations with further price increases. To counter this crisis, journal publishers are increasingly marketing their products in the form of packages. These packages, often called “big deals,” contain significantly more content but are thus also higher priced. Libraries that want to continue to offer their users relevant journals, and in particular the publisher packages, are now joining up with other libraries to form consortia and negotiate better terms together.





Clothbound, book size 240 x 345 mm. Folding board, folds in two. Publication: John Roger Paas, *The German Political Broadsheet 1600-1700*.

## LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

### **NEW APPROACHES TO DIGITAL SERVICE**

The Fokus 1 system was under development from 2015 as a replacement for OttoSerials, and the new system was launched in 2016. The reprogramming and conversion of the applications to the Java programming language had been running in the background at Harrassowitz—not visible or noticeable to the customers—since 2016. This major system changeover was completed by 2020, ensuring the future viability of the IT systems.

Fokus 2 followed as the successor to OttoEditions in 2021. The aim was to bring all of Harrassowitz's service offers together and to make it even easier and clearer for customers to “see the complete Harrassowitz world.” Fokus is seen as a living system. Since the launch of Fokus 1, adjustments and improvements have been made to it on an ongoing basis. Customer feedback and requests can be collected and implemented immediately. The result is a system that precisely maps the workflow in libraries. All products offered by Harrassowitz, both online and in print, are now united under one roof. Users can access the analysis of their orders directly. All processes that can be handled by machine data exchange are now automated, but at the same time, personal contact by email and phone is deliberately still offered and encouraged. With the integration of OttoEditions into Fokus, a major goal set years ago has been achieved.

### **DIGITALIZATION IN PUBLISHING**

Producing books of high quality is the main and essential aim of the Harrassowitz Publishing House. Harrassowitz finds solutions for the most diverse requirements of a scholarly publication—for example, an archaeological excavation report with large-format illustrations, printed plates, drawings, and plans; large and extra-large books, with separate folding plans and other inserts bound in or enclosed in flaps, in slipcases, or with cassettes, with printed preliminaries and postscripts; and last but not least, an attractive cover.

In addition, digitalization was and is an important process that affects every area of publishing. Today, ninety percent of all new publications from Harrassowitz can also be purchased as e-books, and the range of digital journals is also continually being expanded. Open-access publications are available in significant numbers and can be downloaded directly from the publisher's website, which was redesigned a few years ago, or from external repositories. In the field of advertising, digital advertising media now frequently take the place of printed catalogs and advertisements. Social media, for instance, allow the publisher a more personalized contact with its audience. In 2022, the launch of a dedicated Harrassowitz Library will lay the foundation for a further, even more comprehensive expansion of the digital service.

With a total of 4,500 publications, around 1,000 e-books, some 150 active book series, and more than 30 journals and yearbooks, as well as some 250 new publications each year, Harrassowitz is now one of the leading international academic publishers.<sup>1</sup>

#### **THE HARRASSOWITZ TEAM**

Qualified and committed employees who demonstrate high quality standards in their daily interaction with customers are essential for the international library service. The job requirements profile of the classic bookseller has expanded to include indispensable language skills, and academic education is also desired in numerous positions. Depending on the department, employees must also possess commercial or IT expertise. In addition, the high degree of digitalization of work processes and the networking of various systems require permanent learning on the job. The requirements for jobs at Harrassowitz have therefore increased significantly. The time it used to take to complete the entire bookseller training program, for example, is now required just for induction into the journals department's processes.

As a family-run company with flat hierarchies, Harrassowitz attaches great importance to good internal communication. We tackle new developments as a team, be it in the development of new customer services or when developing application programs in-house. Sales and employees from the

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1 On the history of publishing, see generally Barbara Krauß and Steffen Schickling: *150 Jahre Harrassowitz Verlag – 150 Jahre im Dienst der Wissenschaft. Ein Blick zurück*. In: *150 Jahre Harrassowitz Verlag. Katalog der lieferbaren Titel 2022 mit Beiträgen zur Verlagsgeschichte und zum Programm*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2022, pp. 5–20. Some information for this company history was also taken from it.



Two volumes and cassette with fifty-seven partly extra-large supplements. Publication: Hartmut Kühne, The Citadel of Dur-Katlimmu in Middle and Neo-Assyrian Time.”



2022 anniversary catalog published by the Harrassowitz Publishing House, edited by Dr. Barbara Krauß.

specialist departments are also heavily involved in such processes, as well as our customers in focus groups. This cooperative working style also fosters personal ties and a bond within the company. Many of the projects and initiatives for improving internal workflows utilize the suggestions of employees to achieve their goals. This is the creative pool of ideas for serving customers that is so crucial to the company’s progress. Harrassowitz employees don’t settle for half-measures: they always go the extra mile to meet and even exceed customer expectations. The company values, “Service – Quality – Integrity,” stand for service to academic education and science worldwide. Underlying all of them is the belief in promoting the exchange of ideas.

Harrassowitz is an employer that our employees gladly recommend to others. We already have some colleagues who have been “recruited” by employees of the company. The turnover in staff within the company is low to this day because Harrassowitz always offers exciting development opportunities. A career that leads from foreign language secretary, to assistant to the HR manager, and finally to looking after European customers is just one example.



State of emergency: backlog of parcel shipments, 2020.

## **LOOKING AHEAD WITH CONFIDENCE**

Harrassowitz is looking to the future with confidence. We have managed well the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic since 2020, and there have certainly been quite a few of them. In addition to in-house hygiene concepts and other preventive measures, one of the big issues was the closure of universities around the world during the first wave of the pandemic. Not even packages were accepted anymore. In order to keep Harrassowitz in Erbenheim up and running, we store the books for several weeks. But weeks turn into months, and for Harrassowitz that means a huge backlog that takes up space in the building.

But in the end, Harrassowitz manages to meet all of our customers' wishes. The packages that have been left lying around are sent out in the requested numbers, separated by invoice number or even by recipient. All of them at once would be too much for any library. Books that are particularly urgent are identified and given priority in shipping.

In addition, agreements are reached with publishers to suspend direct deliveries of journals in order to prevent gaps in subscriptions. This ensures seamless, albeit delayed, delivery for all libraries. On the other hand, continuity is also ensured among suppliers. The company is proud to have managed to navigate this period with the requisite caution and without reducing our employees' working hours. Harrassowitz has once again in its long history demonstrated its reliability to publishers, customers, and employees. Customer focus was and still is the overriding principle of Harrassowitz's corporate philosophy.

Committed and highly qualified employees, flat hierarchies and short paths, and the cultivation of corporate values make it possible to meet the wishes and ideas of business partners at an early stage and to continue to develop value-added services for libraries, publishers, and authors.

We can therefore meet with optimism the coming developments in the world of libraries and scholarly publications. As in the past 150 years, Harrassowitz looks forward to continuing to make its vast expertise and quality of service available to academic libraries. This is true to the company vision: "Our vision is to be the premier content management solutions provider and first-choice service partner of academic libraries worldwide."

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