Call for papers for a one-day seminar
Collecting, classifying and documenting the war
Libraries and the First World War (1914–1939)

Date: 19 June 2026
Venue: Enssib and Lyon Municipal Library

Enssib and the Centre Gabriel Naudé, as part of an emerging research program on libraries and wars in the contemporary era, with the support of the Lyon Municipal Library, la Contemporaine, the National University Library of Strasbourg, the University of Picardie Jules Verne and the International Research Centre of the Historial de la Grande Guerre, are organising a one-day seminar on the theme 'Collecting, classifying and documenting war: libraries and the First World War (1914–1939)'.

From 1914 onwards, libraries —regardless of their size— found themselves facing unprecedented challenges: protecting collections from destruction, coping with staff shortages due to mobilization whilst maintaining their regular duties, responding to government calls to participate in propaganda efforts, and, as the conflict dragged on, collecting the 'Storm of Paper'[1] pouring from the printing presses, which bore witness to the 'Time of Greatness[2] in which the contemporaries of 1914–1918 found themselves immersed.

This extensive collecting included books, newspapers and periodicals mass-produced during the conflict, as well as a no less vast body of related material: posters, leaflets, ephemera of all kinds, illustrated postcards, handwritten accounts, handmade trench or prisoner-of-war camp newspapers and even works of arts and objects... Faced with this challenge, some institutions, particularly in Germany where this practice was most common[3] , created specialized collections focusing on the ongoing war. A catalogue of these collections was even published in 1917[4].

The end of the conflict sometimes brought an end to the collection process, as in Lyon[5] or Strasbourg[6] , for various reasons. Nevertheless, the vast quantities of documents entering the collections required library processing and promotion, whilst the first possible uses for these collections began to emerge[7] . Other documents could also enrich the collections, such as archives or personal unpublished accounts, testimonies or correspondence. New collections

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[1] Didier Christophe (dir.) *1914-1918 Orages de papiers. Les collections de guerre des bibliothèques*, Paris, Somogy, 2008.
[2] Natter, Wolfgang G., *Literature at War 1914–1940. Representing the 'Time of Greatness' in Germany,* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999.
[3] Among the many projects and publications on the subject, we should mention the website https://www.kriegssammlungen.de/. See in particular: Gaertringen Julia Freifrau Hiller von, Kriegssammlungen 1914–1918, Frankfurt am Main, Klostermann, 2014; Jacobi Johannes, *The Great War, the German Library and its War Collection 1914/18*, Berlin, epubli, 2023; Hamann Olaf, Wojtecki Wolfram, *"War 1914". A Special Collection of the Berlin State Library. Exhibition Catalogue,* Berlin, SBPK, 1999.
[4] Buddecke Albert, *Die Kriegssammlungen. Ein Nachweis ihrer Einrichtung und ihres Bestandes,* Oldenburg i. Gr., Stalling, 1917.
[5] Bréban Thomas, Charmasson-Creus Anne, Fouillet Bruno, et Giraudier Fanny, « Le fonds de la guerre de la bibliothèque de Lyon », dans *Bulletin des bibliothèques de France (BBF),* 2014, n° 3, p. 146-159.
Online : https://bbf.enssib.fr/consulter/bbf-2014-03-0146-012
[6] Gueslin Julien, « Que faire d'une bibliothèque allemande ? La longue gestation de la BNU après 1918 » dans *La Revue de la BNU* [En ligne], 14 | 2016, mis en ligne le 01 janvier 2020, consulté le 16 mars 2026. URL : http://journals.openedition.org/rbnu/1239.
[7] Gilles Benjamin, « L'expérience de la guerre dans ses interstices : Pierre Renouvin et la création du fichier "Psychologie du combattant" » dans *Matériaux pour l'histoire de notre temps*, 2010/3 N° 100, 2010.

dedicated to the conflict that had just ended were also created after 1918, such as, to take just one example, the Hoover War Library[8] .

Compared to other issues such as the protection of collections[9] , the documentation of heritage destruction, the creation of reading access services for combatants, the wounded or prisoners, or even participation in propaganda, this study day aims to focus on the work of libraries and their staff in the collection, classification, cataloguing, networking and promoting these materials during and after the conflict.

Certain cases have already been the subject of studies, such as the Bibliothèque-Musée de la Guerre[10] , the war collections of the Municipal Library of Lyon, and the National University Library of Strasbourg. The case of German libraries is undoubtedly the most systematically studied to date. This study day aims to broaden our knowledge both of cases not yet studied and of the origins, development and uses of war collections in their early years.

Possible areas for discussion

- Collection policies during wartime: the creation of special collections, patriotic donations, emergency purchases.
- Document types: printed matter, leaflets, photographs, ephemera, testimonies, correspondence, artefacts.
- Key players: librarians, local scholars, public authorities, associations and veterans.
- Classification and description practices: bibliographic tools, catalogues, indexing, war archives.
- The international circulation of documentary knowledge and cooperation between European libraries.
- The memory of the war in libraries between the two world wars: commemoration, exhibitions, heritage preservation.

Submission guidelines

Proposals for papers (title, abstract of approximately 2,000 characters, bio-bibliographical note of around ten lines) should be sent by **19 April 2026** to the following address: nicolas.beaupre[a]enssib.fr.
Contributions may be presented in French or English.
Organising Committee: Centre Gabriel Naudé
Scientific Committee: Nicolas Beaupré, Susan Kovacs (Enssib), Xavier Sené (La Contemporaine), Jérôme Schweitzer, Christophe Didier (BNUS), Emmanuelle Cronier, Benjamin Gilles (UPJV), Solène Amice (University of Paris 1, Île-de-France Region), Martine Poulain (Gabriel Naudé Centre).

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[8] Patenaude Bertrand M., *Defining Moments: The First One Hundred Years of the Hoover Institution*, Stanford, Hoover Institution Press, 2019.

[9] Poulain Martine, « Les bibliothèques durant la grande guerre », dans *Bulletin des bibliothèques de France* (BBF), 2014, n° 3, p. 114-131 ; Berthet Claire, *Les bibliothèques françaises durant la Grande guerre, 1914-années 1920*. Mémoire de master Histoire, Université de Paris I, 2019 ⟨dumas-02465203⟩.

[10] See the research programme and seminar on the history of "la Contemporaine" with the support of the ACTIVATE program: https://lcbam.hypotheses.org/histoire-de-la-contemporaine/seminaire and https://activate-horizon.eu/ and also: Becker, Jean-Jacques, « La Grande Guerre et la naissance de la BDIC » Introduction au dossier « Pratiques de recherche et collections » de la BDIC dans *Matériaux pour l'histoire de notre temps,* 2010/3 N° 100, 2010 ; Fieschi, Caroline, « Le Musée de la Guerre pendant l'entre-deux-guerres : qu'acquiert-on ? Que montre-t-on ? » dans *Matériaux pour l'histoire de notre temps*, 2017/2 N° 125-126, 2017. p.24-31. CAIRN.INFO, shs.cairn.info/revue-materiaux-pour-l-histoire-de-notre-temps-2017-3-page-24?lang=fr ; Tesnière Valérie, « La BDIC dans le "moment documentaire" » dans *Matériaux pour l'histoire de notre temps*, 2010/3 N° 100, 2010. p.7-13. CAIRN.INFO, shs.cairn.info/revue-materiaux-pour-l-histoire-de-notre-temps-2010-4-page-7?lang=fr.