



# Jewish Museum Berlin

2013

## **Press Information**

### **: Research and Education at the Jewish Museum Berlin**

The Jewish Museum Berlin is a lively center for German-Jewish history and culture featuring a permanent exhibition on two millennia of German-Jewish history, changing exhibitions on historico-cultural themes, contemporary art installations, showcase presentations, a collection, educational work, and a diverse program of events. The museum's aim is to provide a forum for research, discussion, and exchange of ideas. Researchers, teachers, students, school groups, and the interested public are welcome to visit the archive and the library. The educational programs on the work of the archive and the museum convey the content of the museum to children, young people, and adults of all ages.

#### **The Jewish Museum Berlin Archive**

The Jewish Museum Berlin archive holds over 1,700 individual and family collections that document the lives and fates of German Jews and German-Jewish families in diverse ways. The holdings are almost exclusively from private donations and include letters of protection, certificates of citizenship, marriage certificates and other marital status documents, numerous apprenticeship and military service certificates, documents from professional life, business, scientific, and private correspondence, diaries and memoirs. The written material is enhanced by family photos, mementos, and objects of daily use. The collection aims to document German-Jewish history in all its diversity – religious, cultural, political, and business life as well as the social scene and personal experiences. The holdings on middle-class life during the Empire, the participation of German Jews in the First World War, and persecution and emigration during the Nazi era are particularly extensive. They form the historical focus of the



collection, though individual collections range from the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century to the present. Since most of the collections originated in Berlin, the majority of material in stock stems from this city. In recent years, however, additional collections from other cities and regions all over Germany and German-speaking territories have been added to the inventory. Thus the various family collections have gained increasing importance and are used extensively for scientific research as well as historico-political education.

### **Dependency of the Leo Baeck Archive**

The archive of the New York Leo Baeck Institute opened a dependency at the Jewish Museum Berlin when it opened in September 2001. This provided access to one of the largest archives on German-Jewish history in Germany. Named after Rabbi Leo Baeck, one of German Jewry's most significant representatives, the institute – founded in New York, London, and Jerusalem in 1955 – is devoted to researching the history of German Jewry since the Enlightenment. The New York archive holds an extensive collection of materials – testimonies to religious, social, cultural, intellectual, political, and business life reflect the complete spectrum of German-Jewish existence.

Around half of the New York holdings can now be viewed in the Jewish Museum Berlin Reading Room in the form of over 4,000 microfilms. They include the legacies of prominent Jews such as the author Georg Hermann or the philosopher Franz Rosenzweig as well as a collection of over 1,300 memoirs. Ten collections with original documents have been given to the Berlin dependency.

### **Dependency of the Wiener Library**

A dependency of the Wiener Library was opened at the Jewish Museum Berlin in spring 2008. The Wiener Library is the oldest institution worldwide documenting the Nazi era and its crimes. Alfred Wiener, one of the leading politicians of the Central Association for German Citizens of the Jewish Faith, founded the Jewish Central Information Office in his place of refuge,



Amsterdam, in 1933. He moved the collection to London in 1939 where it has remained to this day.

Library and archival holdings of the Wiener Library provide research material on a wide range of themes including the history of Nazism, Jewish history in Germany prior to 1933, refugees and expatriates in Great Britain, children's transports (Kindertransporte), resistance against the Nazi regime, Holocaust, war crimes and war crime trials, and anti-Semitism. The collection is made up of books, brochures and flyers, newspapers and magazines, eyewitness accounts, personal bequests, photographs, and films. Approximately 500 microfilms of these materials are available in the Reading Room at the Jewish Museum Berlin. These holdings are listed in the Wiener Library's online catalog. Moreover users of the dependency at the Jewish Museum Berlin can gain access to the digital collections "Testaments of the Holocaust" and "Henriques Collection."

### **The Jewish Museum Berlin Library**

The Jewish Museum's specialist scientific library currently comprises approximately 70,000 media. All publications can be researched online and viewed in the Reading Room. Alongside primary and research literature on German-Jewish history, culture, art, religion, and philosophy, the collection also includes historical magazines and current periodicals, electronic media, and databases. The collection's thematic foci arise from the museum's various exhibition projects. The library's special collections include books published in Germany in Hebrew and Yiddish, Berlin rabbinical and Hebraic literature, prints of works by well-known Jewish artists as well as the complete prints of the Soncino Society of Friends of Jewish Books founded in 1924.

### **Museum and Archive as Learning Venues**

Educational work plays an important role at the Jewish Museum Berlin. There are 16 tours through the permanent exhibition on different themes from German-Jewish history to choose from – from "The Jewish World in the Middle Ages" to the tour comparing religions entitled "Isn't it like that in



Islam, too?" The museum also offers tours through the temporary exhibitions, student project days, and workshops, vacation programs for children, workshops about anti-Semitism, and training courses for teachers and educators. The Jewish Museum Berlin has also published an annotated source compilation on German-Jewish history for teachers containing ideas and materials for lessons leading up to and following a visit to the museum. Over 7,000 tours – many of them for school groups – took place in 2010. Around every fifth visitor in 2010 was under 18 – remarkably young for a historical museum.

Furthermore, the archive holds about 40 workshops a year where young people explore themes such as emigration or daily life in the Nazi era with the help of staff from the archive and education department. These workshops enable young people to speak to the museum's donors who tell of their experiences as witnesses of the time.

In order to reach more school students, the museum has been traveling all over the country since 2007 with the mobile educational project "on.tour – The Jewish Museum Berlin Tours Schools." In two mobile exhibitions and interactive workshops aimed at different age groups (grade 5 to 13 and 8 to 13) museum guides invite students to discuss the Jewish past and present. In addition to schools in all 16 federal states, the "on.tour" team has also visited the juvenile prison in Berlin.

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