

White Rose University Consortium: College of Arts and Humanities

Arts and Humanities Research Culture in Germany

Research

- [Arts and Humanities Research Institutions](#)
- [Libraries](#)
- [Archives](#)
- [Online Resources](#)
- [IT Equipment](#)
- [Glossary](#)
- [Web Links](#)



Arts and Humanities Research Institutions

The Federal Ministry of Education and Research currently stresses the importance of opening up research to the wider public (esp. with view to cultural heritage) and widening participation activities of benefit to educationally deprived children and teenagers. It has given two themes special priority until 2014 and 2017, respectively: these are the 'language of objects' and 'cultural encounters'. Read more about their goals and emphases in funding, and the associated projects on the [Federal Ministry of Education and Research](#) website.

The DFG is Germany's largest research funding organisation. DFG is short for [Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft](#) (German Research Foundation). The DFG funds research projects in all fields of science and the humanities. This includes support for individual projects and research collaboration, awards for outstanding research achievements, and funding for scientific infrastructure and scientific cooperation. Awards made by the DFG are highly prestigious. In the organisation's mission statements, it says:

'In meeting its responsibilities as a research funding organisation, the DFG must remain abreast of current developments in higher education. In doing so, the DFG is able to address challenges such as the need to provide sustainable support for young researchers, the interdisciplinaryisation of the sciences and humanities, and support for networking in the field of research.'

The Swiss equivalent to the DFG would be the [Schweizerische Nationalfonds](#) (SNF) or, in English, Swiss National Science Foundation, and in Austria it is the [Fonds zur Förderung der wissenschaftlichen Forschung](#) (FWF) or, in English, Austrian Science Fund.

Among the Max Planck Institutes relevant to the Arts in Humanities are the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science in Berlin, the Max Planck Institute for Foreign and International Social Law in Munich, the Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research in Rostock, the Max Planck Institute for Kohlenforschung (coal research) in Mülheim an der Ruhr, the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies in Cologne, the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic

Diversity in Göttingen. There is an extensive list on the [Federal Ministry of Education and Research](#) website.

Associated with the Leibniz Association and of relevance to the arts and humanities are the Institut für Deutsche Sprache (IDS) in Mannheim, the Institute for Contemporary History in Munich, the Social Science Research Centre Berlin, the Zentrum für Zeithistorische Forschung Potsdam, amongst others. For a full list, see the [Federal Ministry of Education and Research](#) website.

Of special relevance are the following academies: Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur, Mainz, the Nordrhein-Westfälische Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Künste, Düsseldorf, the Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Berlin, the center of advanced european studies and research (caesar), Bonn, the Union of the German Academies of Sciences and Humanities, Mainz, the Heidelberg Academy of Sciences and Humanities, Heidelberg, the Göttingen Academy of Sciences and Humanities, Göttingen, the Akademie der Wissenschaften in Hamburg, Hamburg and the Bavarian Academy of Sciences and Humanities, München. Again, for a list/ map of academies, see the [Federal Ministry of Education and Research](#) website.

To enable you to carry out your own searches, [Forschungsportal](#) has a search engine online for research institutions. Last but certainly not least, the Volkswagen Foundation, the Fritz-Thyssen-Stiftung, the Gerda Henkel Stiftung, and the Robert Bosch Stiftung are important organisations in the funding landscape for the arts and humanities in Germany. The Max Weber Stiftung maintains a number of research institutions for the arts and humanities abroad – with a focus on Germany or German/international relations.

Note that the institutions listed here provide funding for bids made by senior academics in order to set up larger research projects rather than for individual applications made by PhD students.

[Back to top](#)

Libraries

Finding and accessing what you need

At your first visit, bring your U-Card and a form of ID (best is passport) to the library you want to access, and it should be a matter of minutes and a couple of forms until you hold a library pass in your hands that will at least allow you to access their collections within the library, if not enable you to take a certain number of books out, too.

Libraries are (partially) closed on national holidays such as Christmas, Easter, etc. Each library, also often depending on the individual university, has different opening times. Some open until late at night and daily, others might open more like 9-5 and not on Sundays. In between semester times, opening hours might change and be shorter than during the Vorlesungszeit.

In most libraries, it is easy to access the materials. Special collections or particularly valuable books might be on closed stacks. Those might have to be pre-ordered, e.g. on the day before, and you can then read them in a reading room of the library the next day. The main library of a university is typically one where you can borrow books – departmental libraries are often reference libraries.

Every library will have an electronic catalogue that you can access once you have a library pass – you will get log-in details with it that will enable you to search the library's collections, find shelf marks, etc.

Borrowing books

There often is a limit on how many books you can have out at once. At your home university you will be able to get more books out than when you are somewhere where you are an 'external'. Just like in any library in the UK, you might get fined if you do not return books in time or damage them in any way.

In most university libraries you can nowadays photocopy by loading some money on your Ucard and then sliding the Ucard at the photocopier. With regard to copyright, just like in the UK, only a certain percentage of a book may be photocopied legally.

Interlibrary loans are easily placed on a library's website or with a member of staff. A small fee is often charged for an inter-library loan, typically around 1-3 Euros per item.

Most staff will speak English – however, be aware they might do so with varying competence.

Facilities

Every university will have wi-fi access for you and your devices. As a student at that institution, you will automatically have a password; if you are a student elsewhere, you can get online through eduroam, a world-wide roaming access service allowing students, researchers and other staff from participating institutions to obtain Internet connectivity across campus and when visiting other participating institutions. Study spaces can be found in the main library of a university, as well as often in the separate departmental libraries. NB etiquette: You must be as quiet as possible in a library. Your bags/backpack and jacket must be put in the provided lockers before you enter the library space. You may take your own working materials and clear bottled water into most libraries, but food will be forbidden.

Non-University libraries

If you want to access, say, the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek in Leipzig or Frankfurt am Main, be aware that these are reference libraries. Similarly to the procedures in the British Library in London, the titles you want to read must be pre-ordered. You can register online through the [Deutschen Nationalbibliothek](#) portal before your first visit. It is mandatory that you bring your passport as ID.

As with any other non-university library, it is advisable to find out online or over the phone how you can access which books before you take the trip there.

[Back to top](#)

Archives

Access

The Bundesarchiv, to use it as an example here, has a strict understanding of its role in and for the public, stating on their website:

'The Federal Archives have the legal responsibility of permanently preserving the federal archival documents and making them available for use. This includes documents (files, papers, cartographic records, pictures, posters, films, sound recordings and machine-readable data) arising from the central institutions of the Holy Roman Empire (1495-1806), the German Confederation (1815-1866), the German Reich (1867/71-1945), the occupation zones (1945-1949), the German Democratic Republic (1949-1990) and the Federal Republic of Germany (since 1949). The Federal Archives decide whether these documents are assigned a lasting value for research into, or understanding of, German history, the ensuring of the legitimate interests of citizens or the provision of information for legislation, administration and jurisdiction.'

[[Source](#)]

The Bundesarchiv therefore tries to be as accessible as possible, and explains in a [comprehensive guide](#) how to best prepare a visit to the archive (currently only in German). It has sites in eight different cities, with Koblenz being the main one.

The Koblenz site's opening times are from 8 a.m. until 7 p.m. from Monday to Thursday, with Friday having slightly shorter opening times, namely from 8 a.m. until 4 p.m. Other than that, the Bundesarchiv, like any archive, might be (partially) closed on national holidays such as Christmas, Easter or also Tag der deutschen Einheit (Day of German Unification, Oct 3rd); it is best to find out about potential holidays for the specific archive you want to visit as part of your preparations.

Generally, you cannot expect to be able to borrow documents from an archive – depending on your research area, they might be very old and valuable. Photocopying might be possible in cases, but depends on the archive and their rules and regulations. You tend to ask for certain documents to be made available before your visit, so that when you are there, the documents are ready for you to work with on a desk in a reading room.

The Archival System

It may strike you as initially difficult to learn about the different archives in Germany; the main reason for this is the country's federal governmental structure. Because of Germany's federal organisation, there are Stadt-, Landes- and Nationalarchive, plus of course the many archives run by funding bodies (non-profit) or universities. For research students of literature, the Deutsches Literaturarchiv in Marbach may be central, as well as the Goethe-und-Schiller-Archiv in Weimar. Of major interest to historians, to give just one example, may be the Archiv des Instituts für Zeitgeschichte in Munich. For researchers of feminist/gender topics or the women's movement in Germany, a visit to the [FrauenMediaTurm](#) (initiated by Alice Schwarzer) might be worthwhile.

To gain a first overview relevant to your subject area, the [Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung](#) has a map indicating research projects, important locations (e.g. centres with special research interests) and archives in Germany. The [German Research Directory](#) has another map, this one interactive, that you can query to find out where research relevant to your subject area is happening.

There is a well-structured list compiled by the [Worldfuturefund](#) that offers a list of archives and research centres relevant to the study of the Holocaust.

For another valuable source is the [German Historical Institute](#) (in English) which lists all state archives and their holdings. 'Cyndi's list', with a special interest on genealogy, may help to add to your findings. If you are interested in a certain region only, try websites like the [Archive in Nordrhein-Westfalen](#) - this one just listing archives in Nordrhein-Westfalen. You will easily find others like this one by querying google with 'archiv' + [name of the Bundesland].

Other websites listing (fewer) archives include [Deutschland.de](#), and the [National Archives](#). Lastly, here is a comment by the [Goethe Institut](#) on the situation of film archives in Germany. To update the Goethe Institut's findings, read also [Das Bundesarchiv](#) from July 2013.

[Back to top](#)

Online Resources

Catalogues and search engines

Every library has an online catalogue. They will be very similar to use to those you have encountered at libraries in the UK.

Other than searching your home institution's online catalogue, especially for students of literature, a search in Frankfurt University's catalogue might be worthwhile. Frankfurt is in charge of the special collection 'Germanistik, Deutsche Sprache und Literatur', including the collections for linguistics and comparative literature since 1950, commissioned by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft. This means that Frankfurt will hold pretty much anything ever written within these subject areas.

The best national overview over any kind of literature kept in German universities is the [Deutsche Nationalbibliothek](#), which is comparable to the COPAC in the UK.

[BASE](#) is one of the world's largest search engines for scholarship that is freely available online. It is maintained by the university library Bielefeld.

[Dandelon.com](#) is a search engine for scholarly literature.

For those with an interest in the digital humanities, an area of research that is getting more and more attention as well as research funding in Germany, check out the [Digital Humanities im deutschsprachigen Raum](#) website.

Check your university's website for a guide to researching your subject's literature (both online and in libraries), or talk to your subject's librarian at your home institution to learn about the databases and search engines most relevant to your project.

Access

Digitisation is recognised to be highly important in Germany, just as is access to resources in general, not only for researchers, but for the general wider public. Ease of access is therefore given a high priority.

Just like in the UK, there is a tendency towards open access in German academia. However, at the current moment, you will still have to access most resources via your university library, and in particular the leading journals in your field (as opposed to e.g. postgraduate journals) will not be open access. There are two ways of accessing these journals: either by being physically present in the library and using one of the networked computers there, or by installing a vpn-connection (Virtual Private Network) on your laptop or computer at home. Once you have done so, you can access your library's online resources from anywhere with an internet connection, as your computer is then recognised as belonging to the university network.

[Back to top](#)

IT Equipment

All university departments will have computer clusters, often called 'computer pools' in Germany, which are free to use for students and people otherwise affiliated with the university. Alternatively, if you bring your own laptop into university but want to work in the library, you can expect plug sockets and desks there, enabling you to work in silence.

Printing and photocopying is not free, however, it is normally very cheap (around 4 cents per page). As in the UK, you will have some kind of U-card that you can top up with some change to use for printing/ photocopying. You will also notice a lot of copyshops around campus, which are useful especially for more specialist printing tasks.

Often, at universities, students will be able to buy discounted software, or will be able to use these programmes remotely through e.g. a vpn-connection. Departments will not necessarily fund software for you to have on your personal computer, but you can normally rely on them having the soft- and hardware in place that is necessary for your project; they will have used it before. Especially if it is essential for you to use it, its cost will most likely have been factored in when you were given the offer from the university in the first place.

[Back to top](#)

Glossary

Academic abbreviations and acronyms

The most extensive list of academic titles and their abbreviations is to be found on [German Wikipedia](#).

Academic terms

Kunsthochschule: college of art.

Musikhochschule: college of music

[Back to top](#)

Web Links

The [Federal Ministry of Education and Research](#) website contains information about their goals, funding and projects.

The [Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft](#) (DFG) is Germany's largest research funding organisation. The Swiss equivalent to the DFG would be the [Schweizerische Nationalfonds](#) (SNF) and in Austria it is the [Fonds zur Förderung der wissenschaftlichen Forschung](#) (FWF).

The [Forschung Portal](#) has an online search engine for research institutions.

The [Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung](#) website has a map indicating research projects, important locations (e.g. centres with special research interests) and archives in Germany.

The [German Research Directory](#) has an interactive map that you can query to find out where research relevant to your subject area is happening.

The [Worldfuturefund](#) offers a list of archives and research centres relevant to the study of the Holocaust.

The [German Historical Institute](#) lists all state archives and their holdings.

Other websites listing (fewer) archives include [Deutschland.de](#), and the [National Archives](#).

The best national overview over any kind of literature kept in German universities is the [Deutsche Nationalbibliothek](#), which is comparable to the COPAC in the UK.

[BASE](#) is one of the world's largest search engines for scholarship that is freely available online. It is maintained by the university library Bielefeld.

[Dandelon.com](#) is a search engine for scholarly literature.

[Digital Humanities im deutschsprachigen Raum](#) is a website is for researchers in the digital humanities.

[Back to top](#)



Copyright © 2013 University of Leeds. Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 Unported License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/>.