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Swiss Literary Archives

The deposit of key holdings of the Robert Walser Foundation brought the SLA its most significant new acquisition since its inception. – Archives are of growing importance to literary studies, as demonstrated by the *Schreiben und Streichen* (“writing and deleting”) conference.

Collection

As it relocated from Zurich to Bern, the Robert Walser Foundation deposited some of its key holdings with the SLA: the estates of Robert Walser and Emmy Hennings Ball. The archives of Reto Hännny, Hanna Johansen, Elsbeth Pulver and others were also added to the SLA, which grew over the course of the year with the addition of nine archives and estates. The *Index of manuscript collections* lists 277 items (2008: 240),²⁴ of which 61 are accessible online at www.nb.admin.ch/sla (2008: 54) and 13 in the *HelveticArchives*²⁵ database as well.

As the year ended the papers of Peter Bichsel, Hugo Loetscher, Gonzague de Reynold, Urs Widmer and, thanks to grants from the SLA Support Association, of Hermann Burger, Meret Oppenheim and Anna Felder were in the process of registration and description.

The ‘IMVOCS – Images et Voix de la Culture Suisse’²⁶ project was also completed, and a large proportion of the SLA’s audiovisual documents can now be consulted online on the premises of the NL.

User Services

Use of the SLA has stabilised at a high level, with 2918 reference queries answered (2008: 3024) and 2630 archive boxes prepared for users (2008: 2686).

The SLA helped return two writers to the limelight: On the 50th anniversary of the death of Carl Albert Loosli, the SLA made the inventory of his estate available online, helped to mount the Carl Albert Loosli Society’s exhibition and published an issue of the journal *Quarto*. Another issue trained the spotlight on the life and work of Ulrich Becher, who would have turned 100 in early 2010. A French-language issue of *Quarto* has been dedicated to Agota Kristof, one of Switzerland’s best-known Francophone writers.

An unusually large number of towering figures on today’s Swiss literary scene appeared at SLA events during the year under review: Peter Bichsel, Jacques Chessex, Anna Felder, Franz Hohler, Paul Nizon, Giovanni Orelli and Adolf Muschg. Muschg had been invited by the Goethe Society of Switzerland, which held its annual conference for the first time in collaboration with the SLA.

High points of international academic cooperation were the meeting of the *Cercle d’études internationales Jean Starobinski* at the University of Geneva, featuring a lecture by Tzvetan Todorov, and *Schreiben und Streichen*, an international conference co-hosted with the University of Basel at which speakers considered the role of striking through in the evolution of a text, and the SLA established a new branch of studies respected by researchers in Germany, France and Switzerland. In future, presentations at conferences held at the SLA as well as the proceedings of summer academies will be published in their own individual series in partnership with the publishing houses of Wallstein and Chronos. The first volume, containing the presentations made at “*Es gibt kein grösseres Verbrechen als die Unschuld*”: *Zu den Kriminalromanen von Glauser, Dürrenmatt und Highsmith*, appeared in December.

Research has now been joined by teaching at the Universities of Fribourg and Bern. *Kopfbahnhof Archiv: Endstation oder Forschungsaufbruch* (“A terminus named archive: end of the line or beginning of a new quest?”) is the appealing title of a lecture accompanied by an exercise at the SLA.



The agreement is signed between the Robert Walser Foundation and the NL/SLA: Irmgard Wirtz Eybl (Head SLA), Reto Sorg (Managing Director RWF), Yves Fischer (Deputy Director Federal Office of Culture), Marie-Christine Doffey (Director NL), Lucas Marco Gisi (Head of Archives RWF).



The new Robert Walser Centre is installed in Marktgasse in Bern. Photo © Securitas AG



The original documents – among them Walser’s famed “micro-grammes” – arrive at the SLA. Photo © Securitas AG

²⁴ The discrepancy between this figure and the actual growth of the collection is due to the fact that, here too, existing holdings were progressively registered.

²⁵ www.nb.admin.ch/helveticarchives.

²⁶ www.imvocs.ch. The project was conducted under the aegis of Memoria.v.