

# Swiss Literary Archives

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# Swiss Literary Archives



Typewriters from the SLA collection. From top to bottom: Otto F. Walter, Alice Ceresa, Jacques Chessex. The typewriters are on display in the Hesse room. Images from *Quarto* 34/35, *Literaturarchive*

In 2011 the Swiss Literary Archives (SLA) organised a series of events to mark 20 years since its creation. One unexpected outcome was the acquisition by the SLA of the archive from Peter Schifferli's Arche Verlag.

## 20 Years Swiss Literary Archives

The SLA commenced operations on 11 January 1991, and its 20th anniversary was marked by a series of literary events. The first, on 14 January, was a ceremony for those with close ties to the SLA. Speakers including Peter von Matt, Michel Butor and Giovanni Orelli paid tribute to the work of the SLA and the role of literary archives in cultural memory. The series closed on 11 November with a round-table discussion organised by the Society for the Swiss Literary Archives and moderated by Dieter Bachmann which examined the complex triangular relationship between author, publisher and archive. In between there were a number of evening events each featuring a discussion between an established author and a younger writer; the Museum Night as a night of readings; an appearance at the Salon du Livre in Geneva; and an international symposium on the subject of literary archives. The end of the year saw a double issue of the journal *Quarto* on the subject of literary archives, with contributions from authors, academics and staff of the SLA from each of Switzerland's four cultures.

## Collection

Reports of the SLA's jubilee attracted the attention of Peter Schifferli's heirs, with the result that the archive of Schifferli's Arche Verlag found its way to the Archives. It is hoped that this will pave the way for the acquisition of other archives from Swiss literary publishers. The SLA has the backing of the Society for the SLA in this aim.

The works of the following celebrated Swiss authors are now represented in the SLA: Martin Roda Becher, Remo Fasani, Christian Haller, E.Y. Meyer and Hansjörg Schneider.

During the year in review, work began on cataloguing the most important new acquisition of 2010, the library of Jean Starobinski.

The Index of manuscript collections of Switzerland includes 297 of the SLA's holdings (2010: 295).<sup>36</sup> Inventories of 88 of these are accessible online<sup>37</sup> (2010: 78), while 29 (2010: 11) are also to be found in *HelveticArchives*.<sup>38</sup>

## User Services

The expansion of teaching and research has led to a steady growth in demand for documents in the SLA, which now appears to have levelled off. During 2011, 3283 reference queries were answered (2010: 3460) and 3151 archive boxes prepared for use (2010: 2983). They are consulted in the reading room of the SLA, to which a second room was added in 2011. The specially equipped Hesse room offers additional workplaces and also serves as a presentation and event room.

Courses were once again offered at the Universities of Fribourg and Bern. Key elements of the research events included the international symposium *Literature Archives – Literary Archives* and the meeting of the Cercle d'études internationales Jean Starobinski (in conjunction with the University of Geneva).

Symposia are transformed into publications. The year 2011 saw the publication of the volume *Schreiben und Streichen* by Wallstein and Chronos. The SLA was also co-editor of *Andri Peer "Essais, correspondenza e critica 1947–1994"* published by the Societad Retorumantscha. In addition to the issue of *Quarto* on literary archives, there was also a further issue on the work of Friedrich Glauser. Both issues of the newsletter *Passim* were devoted to the 20th anniversary and the work of the archives.



<sup>36</sup> The difference between this figure and the number of new acquisitions is due to the time delay in the inclusion of new acquisitions in the *Index of manuscript collections in the libraries and archives of Switzerland*.

<sup>37</sup> [www.nb.admin.ch/sla](http://www.nb.admin.ch/sla)

<sup>38</sup> [www.nb.admin.ch/helveticarchives](http://www.nb.admin.ch/helveticarchives)