

sammlung druckwerk

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COLIBRI - Digitization of children's and youth literature from the 19th century

COLIBRI is an acronym for Corpus Libri et Liberi and refers to a project funded by the DFG - Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (German Research Foundation) in 2021 for the digitization of children's and young adult literature. The project involves the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin - Preußischer Kulturbesitz, the University Library of the Technische Universität Braunschweig, the Bielefeld University Library and the Stiftung Internationale Jugendbibliothek München. The aim is to create a digital, freely accessible presentation of German-language Children's and Young Adult literature published between 1801 and 1914, comprising 15,000 works. Beside the time frame, the corpus is open, with picture books alongside text works, fictional literature and non-fiction books, individual works and multi-volume editions. The selection is the result of a consultation between the involved partners, but it is not known which criteria were ultimately decisive. The project is sparsely documented and the workflow is barely comprehensible to outsiders. A webportal has been set up for **COLIBRI**, with access in German and English. Currently (as of mid-April 2025), around 12,000 works are posted, with new ones being added almost daily. The project shall be completed in May of 2024.

The search mask as the central working area of **COLIBRI** is designed according to the usual standard in library catalogues - beyond the specification of author, title and location, search terms of all kinds are possible (supported by an autofill function), also links and the known types of truncation as well as a phrase search (exact word sequence). The search can cover metadata, full texts or both. The results can be sorted and the display can be optimized according to the users' aims by criteria such as relevance, year of publication, alphabetical title order and others. The publication period can be narrowed down using a slider, and further criteria such as structure and document type (monograph, multi-volume work, volume), author and place of publication allow the result to be optimized. The results can be displayed in different ways: image display, table of contents, page preview, bibliographic data, in many cases the full text as a result of OCR processing and others. The DFG Viewer is used as standard for display, alternatively you can switch to the Mirador Viewer. The entire work or parts of it are available for download in various formats, for example as PDF or as image files in various resolutions (also as jpg with maximum pixel count). Data records in XML format support digital processing in databases. Citation suggestions in different variants and in many cases the indication of URN and PURL (some of which were not yet stored with the resolvers) support secure further use. The material - texts and images - is in the public domain and can be used under the usual conditions.

Digitalized copies of children's and young adult literature from the libraries' own collections are increasingly available in German OPACs - including those of the

participating libraries. What is new about **COLIBRI** is that for the first time four libraries have joined forces to present a selection of their holdings in a joint portal. The scientific community as well as the interested enthusiast - who is recommended to browse through the random view - can now access to an unprecedented extent what previously, if not already completely closed, required a visit on site. Unlike the digital copies held by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek (German National Library), which require an on-site visit, they can be accessed worldwide and without restriction. In addition to the portal the digital copies can also be found via the OPACs of the participating libraries, but only for their own works. The integration into the German Digital Library has not yet been implemented.

COLIBRI is an important step for the distant viewing of children's and young adult literature. A profound basis has been created here, which is worth to be expanded quickly. Some additions and improvements should be considered. It would be desirable to be able to create a permanent watch list - this should be possible with simple means, an account can already be set up (currently only for comments). The text recognition (OCR) carried out for many works seems to be more error-prone than usual. A comparison between **COLIBRI** digitized works and digitized works from other institutions¹ shows how different the digitization results and their quality can be. In these cases, however, the image processing implemented in **COLIBRI** can help which also provides links after use. There is no image similarity search as offered by the Bavarian State Library in Munich for its digital image collection, a desideratum that is indispensable for research in order to explore stylistic relationships, developments in illustration and the connection to other scientific disciplines. In so-called toybooks books, for example with illustrations operated by pull tabs such as those by Lothar Meggendorfer and others, the movable illustrations are only shown in one image state at a time. The corresponding changes are not visualized. The Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin has already integrated alternating representations in its own earlier digitizations and the Braunschweig University Library has also developed an effective solution by providing video sequences². In addition to such an 'alternating' presentation it is also important to offer 3D visualizations, such as those created by the Munich Digitization Centre for bavarikon. This is preferably considered for picture books with a spatial effect - just imagine here the famous *Circus* by Lothar Meggendorfer.

The metadata and catalogue enrichment should be improved. No separate catalogue records have been newly created for **COLIBRI**, the information is retrieved via an interface from the entries in the original work. It seems that these have not been specially revised for **COLIBRI**. In contrast to US libraries - like the Cotsen Children's Library at Princeton University with its children's and young adult books - the quality of information here is usually low - the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin is somewhat more detailed here - and usually only includes the necessary information such as title, author, page number, size, etc. In contrast, there is usually no information on the author of the

1 Beispiel: Die beweglichen Bilder mit der Beschreibung einiger schöner Umgebungen Wiens von Leopold Chimani. colibri Digitalisat <https://ds.colibri-portal.eu/image/PPN1801208387/1/> . Digitalisat der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek <https://resolver.obvsg.at/urn:nbn:at:AT-WBR-8063>

2 Beate Nagel und Matthias Kissler. Von analog zu digital: Die Kinderbuchsammlung der Universitätsbibliothek Braunschweig. In: BildWissen – KinderBuch. Historische Sachliteratur für Kinder und Jugendliche und ihre digitale Analyse. Herausgegeben von Sebastian Schmideler und Wiebke Helm. Berlin 2021 Seite 194)

book. In contrast, information especially relevant to the selected period on engravers, printers, printing techniques, material, provenance, related works, to name but a few, is usually missing, as are references to reference works, bibliographies, monographs and essays. Back in the early 1980s Hans Ries set out in detail³ which features and data should be taken into account for children's and young adult books. The Bavarian portal [bavarikon](#) can serve as a model, the comments on the digitized material there are detailed and well-founded. In comparison, the current state of **COLIBRI** shows a clear lack of information. This needs to be addressed for the works already recorded, and should be taken into account from the outset when planning the continuation of the project.

For the first time, libraries have come together with their children's book collections for a joint project. In terms of results this cooperation model seems to have proved its worth and could also lead to cooperation in other fields as a trial run. In the past this has mostly been lacking, not to mention competing developments. With the experience gained at **COLIBRI**, it is conceivable that the idea of a general catalogue of German children's and young adult literature could be taken up again as Ernst L. Hauswedell and others did at the end of the 1970s. The existing combined catalogues do not offer a practicable solution. The relevant holdings of the libraries participating in **COLIBRI** should be available in a joint catalogue with an own portal, some more can be added successively. On the way there, the catalogue records can first be arranged mutually, as the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin and the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München already do. [KuBi Köln](#) (Kunst- und Museumsbibliothek Köln), the Art and Museum Library of the City of Cologne is also user-friendly and optimizes results by combining and showing all entries of its own collection and those of the art historical holdings of the University Library of Cologne and the Art History Institute of the University of Cologne. This should be implemented quickly for the digitized material recorded via **COLIBRI** in order to generate the best possible search results even in cases where a search is not carried out via **COLIBRI**. And is it not conceivable that the experience gained in this project could be used to expand this portal as an information platform similar to Wikimedia, where institutions, researchers, collectors and other interested parties can exchange ideas and contribute their knowledge? The research landscape has so far failed to achieve this - aren't libraries with their excellent expertise and technical possibilities the most empowered competence centers here anyway?

The results of the digitization campaign implemented with **COLIBRI** are impressive. As shown, there is light and shade, but the bottom line is that an impressive step has been taken in a task that is in general far from complete. Much is in motion. From this point of view it is desirable to get information how the project partners assess the experiences after the project has been completed and report on them in the form of an evaluation as Sigrun Putjenter recently did in a constructive and critical manner for the [WegehauptDigital](#) project⁴ implemented by the KJBA of the Staatsbibliothek zu

³ Hans Ries. Grundriß zu einer bibliographischen Behandlung von Illustration und optischer Erscheinungsform im historischen Kinder- und Jugendbuch. In: Schiefertafel Jahrgang V Heft 3 Dezember 1982, 98 – 122. Derselbe. Auf der Suche nach Hilfsmitteln zur Datierung historischer Kinderbücher in Schiefertafel (Jahrgang III Heft 2 August 1980, 81 – 91)

⁴ Sigrun Putjenter: WegehauptDigital – Wunsch und Wirklichkeit der Digitalisierung historischer Kinder- und Jugendliteratur. In: BildWissen – KinderBuch. Historische Sachliteratur für Kinder und Jugendliche und ihre digitale Analyse. Herausgegeben von Sebastian Schmideler und Wiebke Helm. Berlin 2021 Seite 194)

Berlin. COLIBRI represents a stable basis for further development and is a rich source for scholars, antiquarians and collectors as well as for lovers of children's and young adult literature, which can be used profitably in many respects.

We would like to thank all those involved in the project for their impressive work!

Material zum Projekt COLIBRI - Digitalisierung von Kinder- und Jugendliteratur des 19. Jahrhunderts

Hagen / Rimmert (2022)

Isabell Hagen, Edith Rimmert: Colibri - Corpus Libri et Liberi. Digitalisierung von Kinder- und Jugendliteratur des 19. Jahrhunderts. Ein kooperatives Digitalisierungsprojekt. Kolloquium Wissensinfrastruktur UB Bielefeld, 06.05.2022. [PDF](#)

Kissler / Przeperski / Putjenter / Rimmert (2022)

Matthias Kissler, Natalie Przeperski, Sigrun Putjenter, Edith Rimmert: Colibri – die Kombination aller wesentlicher Varianten des Digitalisierungsworkflows in einem Projekt von vier Partnerbibliotheken. 4.Workshop Retrodigitalisierung am 21./22. März 2022. [PDF](#)

Putjenter (2022)

Sigrun Putjenter: Colibri – Klein, flink, bunt. Ein Digitalisierungsprojekt der Universitätsbibliotheken Bielefeld und Braunschweig, der Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin und der Internationalen Jugendbibliothek München.

→ Bibliotheksmagazin. Mitteilungen aus den Staatsbibliotheken in Berlin und München. 17. Jahrgang (2022) Ausgabe 2, Seite 5 – 8. [PDF](#)

Reusch / Wiebe (2021)

Jutta Reusch, Katja Wiebe: Colibri – Corpus Libri et Liberi. Digitalisierung von Kinder- und Jugendliteratur des 19. Jahrhunderts – ein DFG-gefördertes Projekt.

In: Bibliotheksforum Bayern (2021) 4, 6 – 9. [PDF](#)

Schmideler (2024)

Sebastian Schmideler

COLIBRI flieg(t)! Eine digitale Sammlung von 15.000 deutschsprachigen Kinder- und Jugendbüchern aus dem „langen 19. Jahrhundert“ lädt zur wissenschaftlichen Recherche ein

→ KJl&m, 76. Jahrgang, 3.Vj. 2024 Seite 80 - 85