

Walter Benjamin Archives

“It always pleases me to hear of the care you bestow upon the collection of my writings.” In a letter written to Gershom Scholem on 4 April 1937, Walter Benjamin acknowledged the efforts of his friend and went on: “Troubled premonitions tell me that perhaps only our combined archives could present an exhaustive collection of them. For as conscientious as I am in administering my own, I most likely lost several pieces through the hasty departure from Berlin and the unsettled existence of the early years of emigration.”

Although the Walter Benjamin Archives are by no means ‘exhaustive’, they do bring together some 12,000 pages of manuscripts, working papers, correspondence, photographs, and notebooks. The Archives were established in April 2004 by the Hamburg Foundation for the Advancement of Research and Culture as an institution within the Archives of the Academy of Arts. The Archives unite three segments of Benjamin’s literary estate:

The *Frankfurt Section* includes material that Benjamin took with him when he fled from Paris in June 1940. After Benjamin’s death, these papers were passed on to Theodor W. Adorno. Later, documents from the Institute of Social Research and from numerous other sources were added. The *Paris Section* is made up of documents discovered in 1981 in the Bibliothèque Nationale, where they had been hidden by Georges Bataille. Part of this collection was given to Adorno shortly after World War II. The *Berlin Section* comprises material from Benjamin’s last apartment in Paris that was confiscated by the Gestapo, brought to Moscow by the Red Army after the end of the war, given to the German Central Archives of the German Democratic Republic in 1957, and in 1972 passed on to the Academy of Arts in East Berlin. This collection was added to the material in Frankfurt on the Main in 1996.

The Archives also harbor numerous artifacts from private or other collections as well as extensive holdings of posthumous newspaper clippings about Benjamin, translations of his works, scholarly literature on his oeuvre, and relevant audio and film documents.

All manuscripts and documents from the Walter Benjamin Archives can be viewed in the reading room. To preserve the documents, originals are not available for use by visitors. Reproductions of materials from the Theodor W. Adorno Archives (Frankfurt am Main) can also be consulted, as can the Florens Christian Rang Archives.

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Opening hours

Tuesday – Thursday 9:00am – 16:00pm

Friday 9:00am – 15:00pm

We kindly ask for advance notification

Public transport

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