

Thomas KLÖTI (Switzerland):

Making the Ryhiner Collection Accessible – World Wide Web as a possible aid in the provision and distribution of old maps

The Bernese statesman Johann Friedrich von Ryhiner (1732-1803) collected 16.000 old maps, town plans and topographical views of the whole world. It is essential that this collection be preserved, be made accessible and be used. In this respect Prof. Dr. Klaus Aerni of the Geographic Institute at the University of Berne, Prof. Dr. Robert Barth of the Municipal and University Library, Berne, and Dr. Karl Walchli of the Public Records Office, Berne, applied for a grant to carry out a research project, to which the Legislative Assembly of the Canton of Berne agreed in 1993. Since February 1994 the Collection is in the process of being made accessible in a project which will continue for 4 and a half years. Dr. Thomas Klöti was appointed to lead the project, assisted by qualified library staff.

The main aims of the project are the establishment of a catalogue accessible via the Swiss-German Library Network Basle-Berne (DSV-Deutschschweizer Bibliotheksverbund Basel-Bern), the restoration and microfilming of the Collection, as well as the publication of the ensuing results. Various possibilities are open to discussion regarding the publication of a catalogue, either with or without illustrations, e.g. a printed catalogue, a microfiche, a CD-ROM etc. However, the publication of the catalogue is dependent on separate funding, which has yet to be negotiated. Spatial information and data are increasingly also being offered in digital form via networks. Access to the Ryhiner Collection is already globally available on the academic network SWITCH respectively INTERNET. As of autumn 1994 the Ryhiner project also has an e-mail address. Consequently, we have been able to subscribe to subject specific electronically linked discussion groups for map historians and map librarians (e.g. Maphist-I, maps-I, lis-maps, Carta, pollib-I). Whilst navigating around World Wide Web (WWW), moreover, one comes across Home Pages from map collections with an option for calling up several old maps in a digital format from the image database attached to them.

The decision as to whether or in which form the Ryhiner Collection catalogue should be published has not yet been finalised. For the time being further technical and financial developments will be observed, and the feasibility, as well as the demand of the various possibilities, investigated. As a result of catalogue data already recorded, a catalogue printout, as well as the production of a microfiche catalogue is being carried out as a trial run in a limited area.



Furthermore, Frau Caroline Hablützel has written a Home Page using the "Hyper Text Markup Language" (HTML), which is now available on a WWW-Server (URL-Address: <http://ubecclu.unibe.ch/stub/ryhiner/ryhiner.html>). A selection of maps from the Ryhiner Collection has also been made available to the user in an experimental image database. "Interoriginals" will be used as models for the digitisation of the maps. Prior to this the entire collection will be microfilmed in colour, employing the ILFOCHROME-MICROGRAPHIC technique. The microfilming serves two purposes, on the one hand it ensures the security of the stock (the security copy will be stored in a security vault, the working copy will be presented to the user in place of the original) and on the other it enables the microfilm to be scanned as an "Inter-original" (e.g. on a Kodak Photo-CD), thereby making all the variations of image digitisation possible.

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Born in 1952 in Geneva. Having gained an Economics Matura in Olten he went on to study Geography, Social and Economic History at the University of Berne, where he graduated in 1981. In 1982 he joined the Work Group of Swiss Map Librarians and has been president since 1989. In 1990 he co-founded the journal "Cartographica Helvetica" dealing with the history of maps and has been a member of the editorial team since this time. In 1992 he gained a PhD for his dissertation on the Bernese statesman, geographer and map bibliographer Johann Friedrich von Ryhiner (1732-1803). Since 1994 he has led the Ryhiner Collection Research Project.