

8th International Conference on Watermarks in Digital Collections 2025

Abstract for online presentation

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The German Museum of Books and Writing, since 1950 a department of the German National Library, holds one of the largest collection of watermarks in the world. It is comprised of around 400,000 predominantly German pieces from the 15th till the 19th century. The main body comes from the private collection of Karl Theodor Weiß (1872–1945), which came to us in 1964 from the German Paper Museum in Greiz, led by his son Wisso Weiß. Since then, it is an invaluable scientific resource for dating manuscripts of various genres. The constant cataloguing and gained expertise by the responsible employees helped the scientific community in this regard.

Since the transformations of the digital age opened up astonishing new ways of research, the German National Library digitised around 23,000 watermarks of the culturally and historically significant Thuringia region. This means around 95 paper mills and 500 paper makers. Since the beginning of this year, all of these are searchable through the library catalogue: <https://portal.dnb.de/opac/simpleSearch?query=cod%3Dd042&cqlMode=true>

The online presentation will give an overview of the collections history and take a detailed look into the specific problems and solutions while digitising and importing this collection, which for example holds the key to date works of literature and music by Goethe, Schiller, Luther or Bach.