

Johann David Köhler, *Instructions for Travelling Scholars: Libraries, Coin Cabinets, Antiquities Collections, Picture Galleries, Natural History Collections and Art Collections, Etc., with Useful Information for Viewing* (1762)

Abstract

In the featured excerpt, Johann David Köhler (1684–1755) explains why scholars need to travel, and he encourages them to venture forth to learn about various library collections. He offers practical descriptions of famous books and libraries and discusses the rationale for keeping prohibited books in collections.

Source

Prolegomena

Essentially, there are two things that make our scholarship complete: knowledge and experience. We gain knowledge from the lessons of our teachers. We gain experience through our own research, and primarily when traveling. Of course, while we also know of great scholars who have not traveled, the prevailing opinion is that travel is quite necessary for scholars. The two most cultivated peoples, the Romans and the Greeks, considered it imperative to visit foreign lands in order to advance the sciences and to study their arts and customs. The Romans mainly visited Athens, the island of Rhodes, and Marseille (Marsilium). Epictetus, who abhorred vanity and only praised virtuous study, said: “It would be very improper for a man to always stand on his own piece of land like a tree.” One should read Joann Franz Buddeus’s *Dissertat[io] de peregrinationibus Pythagoræ* (*Dissertation on the Travels of Pythagoras*), Kriegk’s *Dissertatio de peregrinationibus Romanorum academicis* (*Dissertation on the Travels of Roman Academics*), Walchius’s *Dissertat[io] de peregrinationibus Ciceronis* (*Dissertation on the Travels of Cicero*), Bernegger’s *Dissertatio de peregrinationibus Studiosorum* (*Dissertation on the Travels of Scholars*). Because scholars mainly undertake journeys to expand their erudition, I wish to show them how best to utilize those things that they are likely to encounter. I wish to show them how to benefit from visiting libraries, coin cabinets, collections of antiquities, picture galleries, natural history collections, and art collections, as well as how to skillfully evaluate them. Therefore, I will depart from that which all others have written about travel to date. Recently, a Benedictine monk, Oliverius Legipontius of Berlin, penned an *Itinerarium feu prudentiam apademicam* (*A Practical Guide to Travel Writing*). My advice will focus not only on the benefits for schools, but also on the benefits for life in general.

About Libraries

Chapter 1

Knowledge of books is indispensable to all scholars. Therefore, when traveling, libraries should be visited first—which requires a great deal of prudence. Four pieces of information are required: general and specific

information about the library; the library's hours; its rules; and its special features. First, we wish to look at libraries in general, and then at their contents. Certainly, one must observe that: (1) There are both private and public libraries, so one must inquire in each locale. I refer to public libraries as those which have been established by great men, cities, universities, schools, or scholarly societies. There is no country where princes and the estates have not established libraries for the sake of their subjects. At universities and secondary schools, libraries are a necessity. I call them public libraries because they are accessible to everyone. They are preferable to private libraries insofar as they cover all areas of knowledge; are larger, more precious, more enduring; and are constantly expanding. I regard private libraries as those which have been assembled by people of high esteem and by respected scholars. They are not as generalized as public libraries. Each one has been assembled for exclusive use, with access offered to others only out of consideration. Because the collections are usually incomplete, each acquires books according to its own specific goals. They are not open at all times (not even in Paris, with its many foreigners), and ultimately, they are not meant to be permanent. One example is the library of the great president of parliament, Jacobi Thuani, for which he immediately set up a trust, but not a permanent one. (2) General information about libraries can be obtained from various books. These include Galloie's *Traitté des plus belles bibliothèques de l'Europe* (*Survey of the Most Beautiful Libraries of Europe*) and the French Jesuit Ludovici Jacobi's book, titled *Lobmeier de Bibliothecis* (*Highly Regarded Libraries*), Utrecht 1586, eight volumes. Extensive information about these texts can be found in Struvius's *Introductione in Rem litterariam* (*Your Introduction to Literature*). But one is better off reading special current news items. For this, Conringe has written an *Epistolam de Bibliotheca Guelpherbytana* (*Letter from the Wolfenbüttel Library*), and after him, Burcardus produced two small volumes (quartos), Marter's *De præcipuis bibliothecis Parisiensibus* (*Exemplary Libraries of Paris*), Crantz's *de Bibliothecis Sueciæ* (*Swedish Libraries*), Bichardus, *de bibliotheca Vindobonensi* (*Viennese Libraries*), and Marter's *Dissertatio de celebrioribus bibliothecis* (*Dissertation on Famous Libraries*). (3) The guidelines to be followed when visiting libraries are as follows: Once I know a library's location, I must visit at the proper time. I must also take note of its rules, i.e., whether I may take out a book myself, and copy something from it, and the manner in which this is allowed. I must request the library catalog, which is arranged either by *locales*, according to the organization of the library itself; *materiales*, according to the subject matter of the books; or *alphabetici*, alphabetically. Consequently, it is most important to observe just how the books are organized. Gabriel Naudé (a medical doctor) was one of the great librarians of our time. Adrianus Baillet was a librarian for Cardinal Launoie. But these two great men could not agree on how to organize a library. I had *Syllogem aliquot Consiliorum de adornanda bibliotheca* (*Several Recommendations on How to Organize a Library*) printed in Altdorf. Therein is one approach by Garnier, head of the Jesuit College Library in Paris. Another recommendation about library organization is from the famous Dane, Friderici Rosgard, who is quite clever and well traveled. Finally, there is also a proposal by the famous prelate Giusto Fontanini. Generally speaking, the best way to proceed is to divide the library into four parts according to the four main sciences. The section for theologians is separated into orthodox and heterodox, the latter of which is kept closed. The Jesuit order divides libraries into *bibliothecam Societatis* and *peregrinorum*, i.e., into books by Jesuits and those by other scholars. It is advisable to place signs that indicate the subject areas of the books. In many libraries, such as the Raths-Bibliothek in Leipzig, the books stand in cases covered with wire. In France, there is a silk or leather curtain on every shelf, and in some places, a cardboard cover is placed over the volumes to give the various editions and formats of a book the appearance of uniform size. These are the main issues we must note regarding libraries.

[...]

In libraries, prohibited books are usually set apart. We have three different kinds. Some are forbidden because they attack religion; others because they can stir up trouble among the citizenry; and still others because they can

corrupt proper social mores. Since the Roman Council of Trent, the Papists have employed a censor. See Franz's *Dissertatio de indicibus papistarum librorum prohibitorum* (*Index of Books Prohibited by the Pope*), Baillet's *Dans les jugemens des savans* (*In the Judgement of the Experts*), vol. 1. In Ingolstadt there is a justification for the *Index of Prohibited Books*. There are three categories: *libri prohibiti* are books that no one is allowed to read without permission; *libri expurgandi* are books in which some passages have had to be deleted; and *libri plane abolendi* are books offensive enough to be burned. In Catholic libraries, they are either stored in special rooms or locked up on shelves behind metal bars. In *Augustinus*, which was published in 20 folios, the title reads: *Omnia fideliter sunt expuncta, quæ possent fidelium mentes corrumpere* (*All is Faithfully Done to Corrupt the Minds of the Faithful*). In Germany, however, the enforcement is not so strict, and even Catholics may no longer include *Corpus recessuum imperii* (*Decline of the Empire*) on the list of prohibited books, even though it contains *The Peace of Augsburg* and other texts they disapprove of, which is why they were at liberty to put it there in first place. Prohibited books are kept in libraries for the same reason that the most potent poisons are kept in the pharmacy—for beneficial uses. After the cheerful times of the Reformation, one sees that even the worst and most corrupt books could have certain benefits.

Source: Johann David Köhler, *Anweisung für reisende Gelehrte, Bibliotheken, Münz-Cabinette, Antiquitäten-Zimmer, Bilder-Säle, Naturalien- und Kunst-Kammern u.d.m. mit Nutzen zu Besehen*. Frankfurt und Leipzig: In der Knoch- und Eßlingerischen Buchhandlung, 1762, pp. 3–9; 45–47.

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