



## Reading looted books

### Philipp Zschommler (Heidelberg University of Jewish Studies), *Reading looted books: Nazi confiscated property in the Library of the Heidelberg University of Jewish Studies*

Wednesday, April 19, 2023, 12:00 PM - Virtual  
 Pre-register at <http://bit.ly/3LVe3p6>

While the burning of banned writings receives a great deal of attention into our days, the phenomenon of collecting these texts has only been gaining access to research for the last 20 years. Analogous to the exhibition and actions against “Degenerate Art”, the National Socialists used books for propagandist purposes in different forms. Hundreds of thousands of these objects have been preserved to this day, even if in most cases they are not perceived as such. They form a neglected primary source for historical research in detail and above all in constellation. The call numbers, inventory numbers, possession stamps, dedications and handwritten notes give us immediate insights into the history of science and personal history. At the same time, the books provide clues about the context of exclusion, persecution and murder.

Since 2019, the University of Jewish Studies has been following these indications in a project with the aim of reconstructing the biographies of the original owners and returning the books to the heirs and successor organisations. The collection, which is currently under investigation, contains primarily books that had been confiscated by the Nazis as Jewish property in Theresienstadt, Prague and Budapest. Examples are used to illuminate ways from the identification of the owners, their integration into the historical context to restitution.

