

Against the Grain

Manuscript 8447

Collecting to the Core – Gegenwartsromane, Contemporary German-Language Novels

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seconds. That's why verified, reliable, curated content like that offered by **Britannica** is only growing in importance in an age of fake news and misinformation. That's why an increasing number of companies (and the ministries of education of countries around the world) want to partner with **Britannica**, because they realize the importance of reliable information and the companies that produce it.

ATG: *However, you still do some print publishing. We noticed that Britannica's 250th anniversary collector's edition — your final yearbook — is a print product. In fact, you are listed as the author. Can you tell us about that project?*

TP: We produce an occasional print product, here and there, but for all intents and purposes we're a 100 percent-digital company today. Our special one-volume collector's edition of **Britannica** — *the Encyclopaedia Britannica Anniversary Edition: 250 Years of Excellence, 1768-2018* — was a print product because it was the final edition of the print yearbooks that we've published since 1938. It was a pleasure and an honor to edit the final edition in this hallowed tradition.

ATG: *As you look into the future, what adjustments do you anticipate Encyclopaedia Britannica having to make going forward? Do you envision any new services or products? Where do you see Encyclopaedia Britannica in the next few years?*

TP: **Britannica** is thriving today, with products sold and used in 88 countries and contracts with companies and countries on every continent save Antarctica. And we're moving into the realm of voice-activated games and appliances, powered by artificial intelligence. As **Britannica** has proven over 250 years, it's not the medium (print) that made our products special, but rather our message and manner of producing and delivering reliable, verifiable, expert content. Our methods of publishing may have changed since 1768, but our mission hasn't. 🐾

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taking my dogs out for long walks. I also try to travel abroad as much as possible. Of course, even when traveling I seem to be working!

ATG: *Jason and Yvonne, thank you so much for taking the time to talk to us. It's great to see librarians pursuing entrepreneurial efforts like Sidecar Learning. We wish you the best of luck.*

JD: Thank you! We hope that your readers will find our platform useful and we can't wait to hear their feedback.

YM: Thanks so much for the opportunity! 🐾

Collecting to the Core — Gegenwartsromane, Contemporary German-Language Novels

by **Heidi Madden** (Librarian for Western European Studies, Duke University; Germanic Languages and Literature Subject Editor, *Resources for College Libraries*)
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Column Editor's Note: *The "Collecting to the Core" column highlights monographic works that are essential to the academic library within a particular discipline, inspired by the Resources for College Libraries bibliography (online at <http://www.rclweb.net>). In each essay, subject specialists introduce and explain the classic titles and topics that continue to remain relevant to the undergraduate curriculum and library collection. Disciplinary trends may shift, but some classics never go out of style. — AD*

Building a core collection of contemporary German-language novels, or *Gegenwartsromane*, comes with unique challenges. There is a mismatch between a library's budget and the huge publication output, so libraries often use core author lists as a collection development tool. The term "core" is a value judgement and any claims about the canon are debatable. How can a librarian gain confidence in creating such an author list? This article offers some context unique to German studies, together with a well-reasoned, sample core author list.

One of the first challenges in building a collection profile is defining a time frame. What period is designated as "contemporary"? Some might interpret contemporary literature as all living writers, others as new and emerging authors. The term may also refer to recently published novels on the market. In terms of building a collection profile, contemporary can also represent novels that contextualize our understanding of the present, the *Gegenwart*, and, as the sample list below will show, this means that the author list may extend back in time.

The second challenge in collecting contemporary literature is that it represents 25% of the publishing market in any given year, which makes it difficult to rightsize a library budget for the overall German studies collection. The bestseller list is not useful because both the German literary scene and German studies programs in the United States favor "serious" literature — literature recognized through prestigious literary prizes — over bestselling "entertainment," *Unterhaltungsliteratur*. For example, **Charlotte Roche** (b. 1978) gained

popular attention with her book *Feuchtgebiete / Wetlands* (2008), but she is not (yet) considered a core author. Similarly, **Jenny Erpenbeck** (b. 1967) had international success with *Gehen, ging, gegangen / Go, Went, Gone* (2015), but has not (yet) received the volume of critical attention that suggests a core author. There are many metrics for ranking authors to help sift through the considerable number of candidates and some tools for researching authors and their critical reception are discussed below.

The third challenge is discovery. What tools can librarians use to get an overview of potential works and authors? Catalog searches in **Worldcat** are not helpful in identifying contemporary novels and catalog records certainly do not denote "this is a core author." Take, for example, the translation of **Arno Geiger's** novel *Der alte König in seinem Exil / The Old King in His Exile* (2011); it is cataloged with subjects including *Geiger, Arno; Dementia; Older people — Germany*. The **Worldcat** search *German literature — 21st century — History and criticism* can be used

to find literary histories, but authoritative literary histories, as we know them for established periods, have not yet been written for the contemporary period. Literary historians struggle with the tension between understanding the unfinished, evolving nature of a writer's output and the desire to present an author's oeuvre and its organizing

principles within intellectual genealogies. Another problem with literary histories and dictionaries is that critical reception and appreciation changes over time. The history of the *Kindlers Literatur Lexikon* is a case in point.¹ Its three editions illustrate the difficulty with defining the "canon": the first edition was seven volumes, the second edition was twenty volumes, and the third edition was seventeen volumes. The third edition of the print *Kindler* was published in 2009 and actually contains fewer entries than the second edition because it focused on a canon wherein entries comply with editors' criteria for world literature. The *Kindler* is an essential tool for literary research, but the print publication is now ten years old and while the online version is updated every year, it is not expanded with new entries.

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The best resources for identifying authors (and also for understanding the area's scope) are two specialized databases usually only available at PhD-granting institutions: *Bibliographie der deutschen Sprach und Literaturwissenschaft / Bibliography of German Linguistics and Literary Studies* (BDSL) and the *Kritisches Lexikon zur deutschsprachigen Gegenwartsliteratur / Critical Encyclopedia of Contemporary German-language Literature* (KLG).^{2,3} The BDSL is an index of literary criticism published from 1957 to the present, covering literature from the medieval to current eras. For the recent past, the BDSL uses the periodization of 1914-1945; 1945-1989; and 1990 to the present. BDSL includes hundreds of individual author headings under each period, with over 1,800 author entries for the time period from 1990 to the present alone. The KLG is a bio-bibliography of contemporary writers, defined as authors publishing after 1945 to the present, and provides substantial bio-bibliographies for 750 authors. A more accessible resource for college librarians is the open access bibliography of contemporary German literature published by the **Max Kade Center for Contemporary German Literature** and the **Olin Library at Washington University in St. Louis**. Currently produced by **Paul Michael Lützeler** and **Brian Vetruba**, the center has published an issue of the *Annual Bibliography of the Special Contemporary German Literature Collection* every year since 1985.⁴ In 2017, **Olin Library** purchased 828 volumes of contemporary "serious" German literature, including contemporary novels. This bibliography provides a good measure for what a comprehensive budget would look like, although the average college library probably buys fewer German-language books than this for their entire German studies profile.

To face the collection challenges noted above — scope, volume, discovery — and more, many libraries create a core author list, usually with less than 100 authors, to help frame collection goals within budget constraints. How does a librarian define a small core author list in the face of such abundance of choices? Different types of institutions approach this challenge by developing lists aimed at their local users' needs. University programs in literature often provide reading lists (the **University of Trier** has a well-designed list).⁵ Journals like *Cicero* offer best-seller and top 100 lists, such as **Max A. Höfer's** yearly list of 500 intellectuals to watch.⁶ This list is accompanied by the ranking criteria, including a metric for whether an author is trending higher or lower than the prior year. Specialized German-language book vendors like **Harrassowitz** aggregate author metrics like the number of reviews, prestige of prizes received, and more to aid library selection.⁷ **The Resources for College Libraries (RCL)** Germanic Languages and Literatures subject collection features a taxonomy of author headings and a focus on identifying core works in translation as well as in the original.⁸ Every

one of these author lists is different from the next one and the author list speaks to the institution that created it as much as the canon. A librarian should feel empowered to create their own list based on the **RCL** author headings, on a **Harrassowitz** list, or other resources, but scale it to their institutions' research and curricular goals. What follows is a sample author list and accompanying narrative for collecting core contemporary German-language novels.

Period concepts have a special significance for German and European literature because of the Nazi years, which restricted free artistic expression from 1933-1945 in Germany and occupied territories. For Germany, the immediate post-war period was distinct from the turbulent 1960s and the division of Germany into the Federal Republic of Germany / Bundesrepublik Deutschland (BRD) and the German Democratic Republic (East Germany) / Deutsche Demokratische Republik (DDR) effectively created two distinct literary universes from 1949-1990. The period from 1989-90, defined by the fall of the **Berlin Wall** and German reunification, is known as *Die Wende* and everything since is simply post-1990.

Because of this history, writers producing work before 1933 still very much mattered in post-war, post-1945 Europe. To include these authors in a contemporary German literature list helps identify new editions, translations, critical editions, and publications of materials previously not available, like letters and archival materials. **Heinrich Mann** (1871-1950), the author of *Professor Unrat oder das Ende eines Tyrannen / Small Town Tyrant* (1904), a book made famous as the 1930 movie *Der Blaue Engel / The Blue Angel*, was politically engaged in exile and had planned to return to East Germany in 1950, but died unexpectedly. **Thomas Mann** (1875-1955) rose to fame with the novels *Buddenbrooks: Verfall einer Familie / Buddenbrooks: The Decline of a Family* (1901) and *Der Zauberberg / The Magic Mountain* (1924), won the Nobel Prize in 1929, went on to publish *Doktor Faustus / Doctor Faustus* (1947), and then returned to Switzerland in 1952 where he continued with autobiographical writings and shorter fiction until his death. **Hermann Hesse** (1877-1962), the author of *Demian* (1919), *Siddhartha* (1922), and *Steppenwolf* (1927), was rediscovered by a new generation of readers after winning the Nobel Prize in 1946. **Robert Walser** (1878-1956) received praise for *Jakob von Gunten* (1909), but had stopped writing around 1933 and had disappeared from public life by 1945. He is now hailed as a leading figure of Swiss-German literature with an output so prolific that even though editions of his collected works were published in the 1970s, new materials are still being discovered today. **Alfred Döblin** (1878-1957), the author of *Berlin Alexanderplatz: Die Geschichte vom Franz Biberkopf / Alexanderplatz, Berlin: The Story of Franz Biberkopf* (1929), returned to Germany and served in the cultural affairs department in Baden-Baden, amongst many other public humanities activities. **Gottfried Benn** (1886-1956) wrote post-war poems *Statische Gedichte / Static Poems* (1948) and an autobiography *Doppelleben / Double Life*

(1950), establishing himself as an important expressionist. **Hermann Broch** (1886-1951) never returned to Europe, but his novel *Der Tod des Vergil / The Death of Virgil* (1945) was published simultaneously in German and English at a key moment of history, right after the war. **Erich Maria Remarque** (1898-1970) wrote the enduring bestseller *Im Westen nichts Neues / All Quiet on the Western Front* (1929) and then reemerged with *Arc de Triomphe / Arch of Triumph* (1946), although he never returned to Germany. **Anna Seghers** (1900-1983) achieved fame in exile with her novel *Das siebte Kreuz / The Seventh Cross* (1942) and returned to communist East Berlin in 1947. Her long writing career and critical attitude toward East Germany attributed to her work's import beyond German reunification. A full overview of the literary generation marked by emigration and exile is provided by the **Deutsche Nationalbibliothek / German National Library** in the exile collection "Deutsches Exilarchiv 1933-1945."⁹

Many writers born between 1900 and 1930 slowly emerged to define German-language culture after 1945. **Elias Canetti** (1905-1994) had his first success with *Die Blendung / Auto-da-Fé* (1935) and went on to write a celebrated three-volume memoir *Die Gerettete Zunge / The Tongue Set Free* (1977), *Die Fackel im Ohr. Lebensgeschichte 1921-1931 / The Torch in My Ear* (1980), and *Das Augenspiel. Lebensgeschichte 1931-1937 / The Play of the Eyes* (1985), winning the Nobel Prize in 1981. **Wolfgang Koeppen** (1906-1996) never achieved fame during his lifetime, but has since been acclaimed for his power of observation and representation of the political realities of post-war Germany in novels like *Tauben im Gras / Pigeons on the Grass* (1951) and *Das Treibhaus / The Hothouse* (1953). **Max Frisch's** (1911-1991) dramatic work is defined by themes of guilt and responsibility, including his most appreciated novel *Montauk* (1975), a searing autobiographical exploration of relationships and memory. **Arno Schmidt** (1914-1979) emerged as an experimental writer with *Leviathan* (1949) and while his masterpiece *Zettels Traum / Bottom's Dream* (1970) was not translated into English until 2016, **Schmidt's** voluminous output established him as a major presence in German literature. **Peter Weiss** (1916-1982) is a celebrated playwright of works like *Die Ermittlung / The Investigation* (1965), based on transcripts of the Frankfurt Auschwitz Trials of 1963-1965, and his three-volume novel *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands / The Aesthetics of Resistance* (1975-1981), a novel about antifascist resistance. **Ingeborg Bachmann** (1926-1973) experienced Nazi occupation in her hometown of Klagenfurt, Austria, and became an influential public intellectual, poet, and writer after the war. Her novel *Malina* (1971) reflects the early feminist debates. **Walter Kempowski** (1929-2007) is best known for a series of nine novels summarized by the publisher as *Deutsche Chronik / German Chronicle* (1971-1984), but his many works and innovative projects still receive so much attention that a Kempowski-Archiv was founded for this effort in 2007.

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For this cohort of post-1945 authors, one group of writers organized as “Gruppe 47” stands out. This group networked through meetings and literary accolades, influencing the trajectory of post-war literature. The group was active from 1947-1967, though many members are productive even today. Some of the most prominent authors associated with Gruppe 47 whether as a core member or invited guest at an annual meeting, like **Paul Celan** (1920-1970), are: **Ilse Aichinger** (1921-2016); **Ingeborg Bachmann**; **Heinrich Böll** (1917-1985, Nobel Prize in 1972); **Hans Magnus Enzensberger** (b. 1929); **Günter Grass** (1927-2015, Nobel Prize in 1999); **Peter Handke** (b. 1942); **Uwe Johnson** (1934-1984); **Siegfried Lenz** (1926-2014); **Martin Walser** (b. 1927); **Peter Weiss**; **Gabriele Wohmann** (1932-2015).

The generation of writers born in the 1930s and 40s includes writers that came to prominence in East Germany. East German writers are usually studied as a phenomenon, not as canonical literature, with the exception of writers who kept a critical distance and were disassociated with the DDR. Those authors are included below, together with other authors from this generation: **Günter de Bruyn** (b. 1926); **Christa Wolf** (1929-2011); **Thomas Bernhard** (1931-1989); **Gabriele Wohmann**; **Peter Härtling** (1933-2017); **Uwe Timm** (b. 1940); **Barbara Frischmuth** (b. 1941); **Wilhelm Genazino** (1943-2018); **Bernhard Schlink** (b. 1944); **W. G. Sebald** (1944-2001); **Christoph Hein** (b. 1944); **Elfriede Jelinek** (b. 1946, Nobel Prize in 2004); **Rafik Schami** (b. 1946); **Bodo Kirchhoff** (b. 1948); **Patrick Süskind** (b. 1949); **Zsuzsanna Gahse** (b. 1946); **Emine Sevgi Özdamar** (b. 1946); **Barbara Honigmann** (b. 1949).

Writers born in the 1950s and '60s are still emerging as important contemporary authors, true to the adage that it takes 30 years of work to become an overnight sensation. These authors include: **Herta Müller** (b. 1953, Nobel Prize in 2009); **Josef Winkler** (b. 1953); **Robert Menasse** (b. 1954); **Rainald Maria Goetz** (b. 1954); **Christoph Ransmayr** (b. 1954); **Maxim Biller** (b. 1960); **Yōko Tawada** (b. 1960); **Zafer Şenocak** (b. 1961); **Feridun Zaimoğlu** (b. 1964); **Thomas Hettche** (b. 1964); **Ferdinand von Schirach** (b. 1964); **Thomas Brussig** (b. 1964); **Christian Kracht** (b. 1966); **Navid Kermani** (b. 1967); **Arno Geiger** (b. 1968); **Uwe Tellkamp** (b. 1968); **Melinda Nadj Abonji** (b. 1968).

The generation of writers born in the 1970s, '80s, and beyond have not yet made it into the canon and translation is lagging, which means a further delay in appreciation abroad. Researching authors around themes in their fiction, or grouping authors around identities and experiences proves to be a fruitful approach for authors born after 1970. An invaluable tool in this endeavor is the journal *Gegenwartsliteratur: Ein germanistisches Jahrbuch*.¹⁰ It offers the following emerging themes, together with author recommendations: multicultural; Jewish-German; Berlin;

literature and film; new East German literature; after the postmodern; and politically-engaged women writers. In addition to these broad themes from the *Gegenwartsliteratur* volumes, a review of literary genres like pop literature, pop feminism, graphic novels, and national or intercultural identity (German, Austrian, Swiss, Afro-German, Turkish-German, Russian-German, Russian-Jewish-German, Eastern European, refugee, etc.) yields further authors to consider. With an author name in hand, by browsing the BDSL index under *Inhalt* › *Klassifikation* › 1990 bis zur Gegenwart › *Zu einzelnen Autoren*, librarians can quickly judge an emerging author by the critical reception.

A library trying to diversify or update their author list might consider adding some of the following emerging writers to their profile: **Julia Franck** (b. 1970); **Judith Hermann** (b. 1970); **Julya Rabinowich** (b. 1970); **Terézia Mora** (b. 1971); **Kathrin Röggla** (b. 1971); **Lukas Bärfuss** (b. 1971); **Emma Braslavsky** (b. 1971); **Selim Özdoğan** (b. 1971); **Nico Bleutge** (b. 1972); **Thomas Glavinic** (b. 1972); **Jan Böttcher** (b. 1973); **Que Du Luu** (b. 1973); **Juli Zeh** (b. 1974); **Jan Brandt** (b. 1974); **Daniel Kehlmann** (b. 1975); **Benjamin von Stuckrad-Barre** (b. 1975); **Jens Steiner** (b. 1975); **Clemens Meyer** (b. 1977); **Xaver Bayer** (b. 1977); **Alina Bronsky** (b. 1978); **Arno Camenisch** (b. 1978); **Matthias Nawrat** (b. 1979); **Judith Schalansky** (b. 1980); **Marjana Gaponenko** (b. 1981); **Lena Gorelik** (b. 1981); **Nora Bossong** (b. 1982); **Ann Cotten** (b. 1982); **Benjamin Lebert** (b. 1982); **Nino Haratischwili** (b. 1983); **Olga Grjasnowa** (b. 1984); **Susanne Heinrich** (b. 1985); **Sabrina Janesch** (b. 1985).

A typical contemporary German-language literature collection contains canonical authors, emerging writers, diverse themes and author backgrounds, as well as the associated literary criticism, all bound by a fixed budget. An author list can be an effective collection management aid. Libraries may use one of the many existing author lists as a starting point, including the sample list above that identifies under 100 contemporary authors. It is important to understand that because of the volume of output in contemporary literature and the shifting nature of appreciation towards authors or works, author

lists are ever-evolving and seldom comprehensive. Author lists, whether compiled by a department, a book vendor, or **RCL**, should be used as a basis for evaluating what is relevant to support the local institutional needs. An author list that is reviewed every year will help inform and shape the local collection. 🌱

Endnotes

1. **Arnold, Heinz Ludwig**. *Kindlers Literatur Lexikon*. Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 2009.
 2. **Stadt- und Universitätsbibliothek Frankfurt am Main**. *Bibliographie Der Deutschen Sprach- Und Literaturwissenschaft*. Frankfurt am Main, 2004-.
 3. **Korte, Hermann, and Heinze Ludwig Arnold**. *Kritisches Lexikon Zur Deutschsprachigen Gegenwartsliteratur*. München: Edition Text + Kritik, 1978-.
 4. **Vetruba, Brian, Leon Wiese, and Paul Michael Lützeler**. “Thirty-First Annual Bibliography 2017 (Contemporary German Literature Collection).” University Libraries Publications. 24. Accessed April 21, 2019. https://openscholarship.wustl.edu/lib_papers/24
 5. **Universität Trier FB II - Germanistik**. “Trierer Leseliste. Neuere Deutsche Literaturwissenschaft.” Accessed April 21, 2019. https://www.uni-trier.de/fileadmin/fb2/prof/GER/NDL/NDL/Ndl_leseliste.pdf
 6. **Höfer, Max A.** “Ranking. Die 500 Wichtigsten Deutschsprachigen Intellektuellen.” *Cicero: Magazin Für Politische Kultur* 3 (2019): 17-29.
 7. **Harrassowitz**. Accessed April 21, 2019. <https://www.harrassowitz.de>
 8. *Resources for College Libraries*. Accessed April 21, 2019. <http://rclweb.net/>
 9. **Deutsche Nationalbibliothek**. “Deutsches Exilarchiv 1933-1945.” Accessed April 21, 2019. https://www.dnb.de/EN/DEA/dea_node.html
 10. *Gegenwartsliteratur: Ein Germanistisches Jahrbuch = a German Studies Yearbook*. Tübingen: Stauffenburg, 2002-.
- * Editor’s note: Due to space, not all of the titles listed in the essay appear in the endnotes, though many are in the *Resources for College Libraries* database. The dates listed in parentheses within the essay note the work’s German publication date.

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student perspective. Many of the articles will be open access on the **ATG NewsChannel**. www.against-the-grain.com/ And please use the **hashtag#ATGDIGITALTEXTBOOKS** to promote and access to the article!

Congratulate the grand **Ann Michael** for starting a new position as Chief Digital Officer (CDO) at **Public Library of Science (PLOS)**. **Ann** was a big hit during the **2018 Charleston Conference** when as CEO of **Delta Think** she moderated a panel on “Data Expeditions: Mining Data for Effective Decision-Making”

with **Ivy Anderson** and **Gwen Evans**. Here’s the URL to the video of the session <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PR4nf7zjEi0&feature=youtu.be>.

So what has happened to **Delta Think**? **Lauren Kane** has joined as CEO and **Ann Michael** becomes **Chair of the Board** as part of **Delta Think’s** expansion. **Delta Think** is a consulting and advisory firm focused on innovation and growth in scholarly communications. In this role, **Ms. Kane** will lead **Delta Think’s** expansion as the organization increases its footprint as an expert advisor in scholarly communications and a trusted voice in the evolving dialogue on Open Access and Open Science. <https://deltathink.com> 🌱