

JOHANN CHRISTOPH VON ARETIN: A RE-EVALUATION

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THREE major periods of secularization of church property loom large in library history in France after 1789, in Germany after 1802,¹ and in Russia after 1917. Each of these movements set in motion an almost overwhelming flood of bibliographic materials. In Bavaria the genius that channeled the rich resources of monastic libraries into the Hofbibliothek in Munich during the great secularization of the Napoleonic era was Baron Johann Christoph von Aretin.

The Bavarian state chose a capable and faithful man for a tremendously responsible position when it enlisted the service of Aretin, who, on March 24, 1803, began to visit the monasteries of Bavaria to search out and preserve a vast cultural heritage. The life-story of this man, upon whose scholarship and foresight depended the future status of Bavaria in the international realm of culture and learning, began on December 2, 1772, in the Bavarian town of Ingolstadt. Johann Christoph was the third son of Karl Albert von Aretin and Anna Rosina von Weinbach. In 1769 the title of "Baron" (*Freiherr*) had been bestowed upon the grandfather, who had served the state as chief customs inspector at Ingolstadt. His son, Johann Christoph's father, also worked for the Bavarian com-

monwealth, technically in the capacity of engineer and politically in assisting Elector Maximilian Joseph IV to establish the *Generallandesregierung*.

Johann Christoph was sent to the best schools, and it may be said that scholastically, from the first grade until the day of his graduation from the University of Göttingen, he upheld the good name of his maternal ancestor, the proud and learned privy councilor and director of the University of Ingolstadt. Law was his major subject at Heidelberg and Göttingen. Pütter, of Göttingen, took a special interest in his gifted pupil; was instrumental in getting him into the superior court at Wetzlar; and, by interesting him in legal research, helped pave the way for his entry into the Göttinger Sozietät der Wissenschaften (1795) and the Munich Academy (1796). That friends of Aretin's among the Illuminati, a secret society which fought obscurantism in Bavaria, lent a hand in making his membership in the Munich Academy possible has been surmised but never proved.

Aretin might well have been a member of this anti-Catholic society, but he always denied it. What he could not deny was the fact that he was a Catholic in name only. He had inherited in full measure that brand of rationalism for which his kinsman, Josef von Weinbach, the professor and most intimate friend of Adam Weishaupt, was both famous and infamous and which ran counter to the Catholic Weltanschauung. Aretin's biographer finds it possible to say: "Christoph looked at religion only from the political side. He identified Catholicism

¹ Previous to this period, book collections in monasteries within Germany were scattered or destroyed or came into new hands during the Peasants' War, the Reformation, the Thirty Years' War, and the French invasions in 1773 (cf. K. Löffler, *Deutsche Klosterbibliotheken* [Bonn: Schroeder Verlag, 1922], trans. E. Heyse Dummer [Graduate Library School, University of Chicago, 1944], pp. 64 ff.).

with the politics of the Middle Ages and linked the Church with obscurantism."²

Aretin married twice and had three sons. His marital and family relationships were not happy—perhaps because he never considered either religion or the family so important as the state.

An important year in Aretin's career was 1801. When his work as war commissioner had been finished shortly after the events that led to Hohenlinden (December 3, 1800), he took a leave of absence instead of returning to Munich to his post in the Bavarian state service, where he served as Generallandesdirektionsrat. And so, early in 1801, we find him in the French capital. Aretin's main purpose in going to Paris was to make a study of the Bibliothèque Nationale and its organization. He also renewed contacts with scholars already known to him and made the acquaintance of others. Since Aretin was also a historian, Paris appealed to him; for history was being made every day in the capital of Napoleon, the soldier and statesman on whom the eyes of the entire world were focused. Aretin admired Napoleon, the protector of Bavaria, almost as much as he disliked Prussia, Bavaria's rival.³ Aretin's philosophy of state was monarchical, but he was also a radical. As such he believed that, in the great revolution that was still to sweep over German lands, Prussian aristocracy and feudalism would have to be uprooted with drastic thoroughness. His sanction of Napoleon in the era of the Bavarian-

French alliance and his censure of Prussia expressed itself in crescendo tones in a pamphlet, *Die Pläne Napoleons und seine Gegner in Deutschland* (1809). Aretin does not hesitate to celebrate Napoleon as the guardian and hope of Catholicism against the triple alliance of Prussia, England, and Lutheranism. Like Montgelas, Aretin believed that Bavaria also needed France as a protector and friend against Austria. He hoped for the success of the French cause in behalf of one God and one state, and, as a model "world citizen" (*Weltbürger*), he sought to justify Bavarian adherence to France.⁴

The record of Aretin's sojourn in Paris translates the Munich scholar's and booklover's admiration for what he saw in the Bibliothèque Nationale into meaningful language. It is not to be surmised, however, that Aretin became a convert to librarianship while in the hallowed precincts of the Bibliothèque Nationale. Since Aretin was a practical man as well as an ambitious one, he no doubt went to Paris to study library methods and management for a reason. The reason apparently was the appointment to the Hofbibliothek, which awaited him upon his return to Munich in 1802.

At the Hofbibliothek, Aretin was taken in as *Aufseher* in the History Division, a position for which he had been indorsed by his fellow-Academicians in the Königlich Baierische Akademie der Wissenschaften.⁵ That the new appointee was conversant with the subject division to which he was assigned cannot be disputed. Aretin's writings attest to his interests in the historical field as well as to his capability as a historian.

⁴ M. Doeberl, *Entwicklungsgeschichte Bayerns*, II (3d ed.; München: R. Oldenbourg, 1928), 391.

⁵ F. Milkau and G. Leyh, *Handbuch der Bibliothekswissenschaft*, III (Leipzig: Otto Harrassowitz, 1940), 612.

² Erwein von Aretin, "Christoph Freiherr von Aretin: Ein Lebensbild aus der Zeit des Ministers Montgelas," *Gelbe Hefte: historische und politische Zeitschrift für das katholische Deutschland*, III, Part I (1927), 327.

³ Aretin's fierce anti-Prussian attitude exhibits itself fully in his "Lettre d'un Saxon" (1810) carried by Huber's *Morgenbote*. Napoleon's Marshal Davout had it translated into German.

In substantiation of this claim may be mentioned *Ueber die westfälischen Friedensakten* (1802), *Nachrichten zur bayerischen Geschichte* (1809-10), *Literarisches Handbuch für die bayerische Geschichte und all ihre Zweige* (1810), and the essays in his *Beyträge zur Geschichte und Literatur* (1803-7). Aretin's interest in bibliographical history was evidenced in 1801 when he read before the Academy a study entitled "Von den ältesten Denkmälern der Buchdruckerkunst in Baiern und dem Nutzen ihrer näheren Kenntnis," which was published in the same year by the Academy.⁶ In 1796 Aretin had received a gold medal and twenty-five ducats from the Munich Academy for his prize essay on a subject in Bavarian history.⁷ Bavarian history was also his subject in frequent journalistic essays. Doeberl, who refers to Aretin as one of Bavaria's most ardent publicists, names especially two articles written at the time of the ratification of the Bavarian-French pact (September 28, 1805), "Die Oesterreicher in Bayern zu Anfang des 18. Jahrhunderts" and "Die österreichische Räuberei im Jahre 1742."⁸

It is not known what Aretin's relations were to Baron Casimir von Häffelin, court bishop and later cardinal and Bavarian envoy to the Holy See, who directed the Munich library as Oberhofbibliothekar from 1780 to 1803. We do know that Aretin chose to call his chief very deserving and scholarly.⁹ Doeberl characterizes Häffelin as *aufklärungs-freundlich*,¹⁰ which suggests that Aretin, who was all of that and more, probably

agreed with Häffelin on major issues current in the renaissance of Bavaria. Whether Häffelin, who was also a member of the Academy,¹¹ had a direct hand in procuring Aretin for his staff in 1802 cannot be determined. But that he considered Aretin, his fellow-Academician, properly qualified for the post may be accepted as certain in view of the director's proposed policy in 1779 that only members of the Munich Academy should serve as *wissenschaftliche Bibliothekars-beamte*.¹² As such, Aretin entered the Hofbibliothek in 1802.

In 1803 a successor had to be found for Häffelin, who was to go to Rome as Bavarian envoy to the papal court. Aretin was Häffelin's ideal; for he was a scholar and it was scholarship that Häffelin had emphasized when he recommended that the Hofbibliothek personnel should be expected to be productive in research relating to Bavarian history, national biography, and similar fields.¹³ There is reason to believe, therefore, that Aretin's scholarly productivity was a large factor in bringing him the spectacular and speedy promotion from the rank of Aufseher to that of Central- und provisorischer Oberhofbibliothekar on August 26, 1803. The promotion was spectacular as well as speedy, because Aretin did not proceed gradually from rung to rung up the ladder but was catapulted to the top position in an unprecedented manner.

An even more important factor accounting for his rapid rise was the work he did as head of the Commission on Monastic Libraries (*Klosterkommission*).¹⁴ He had been given this respon-

⁶ L. Westenrieder, *Geschichte der bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, Part II: 1778-1800 (München, 1807), p. 600.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 621.

⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 406.

⁹ J. C. von Aretin, *Beyträge zur Geschichte und Literatur, vorzüglich aus den Schätzen der Pfalz-bayerischen Centralbibliothek zu München* (München: Schererische Kunst- und Buchhandlung, 1803-7), I, Part I, 90.

¹⁰ *Op. cit.*, p. 373.

¹¹ Westenrieder, *op. cit.*, p. 580.

¹² W. Sensburg, *Die bayerischen Bibliotheken* (München: Bayerland Verlag, 1926), p. 69.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ J. C. von Aretin, *op. cit.*, I, Part I, 87.

sible post on March 11, 1803, and he completed the difficult assignment in a truly admirable fashion. For eight months he went from monastery to monastery and selected the books which were to be transferred to the Hofbibliothek. This concentration of treasures in one place represented an inestimable gain to knowledge; and for the Hofbibliothek it meant that this institution was to occupy first place among German libraries for the next hundred years.¹⁵ As to Aretin, it must be maintained that he had an outstanding part in bringing the Munich library to fame. With his appointment as Central- und provisorischer Oberhofbibliothekar, recognition came even three months before the completion of his "literarische Geschäftsreise in die bayerischen Abteyen," as Aretin euphemistically chose to call his assignment. In 1806, after additional success had been achieved, Aretin exchanged this rank for the permanent rank of Oberhofbibliothekar.

Aretin's greatest single achievement while librarian was his selection of incunabula, manuscripts, and books at the secularized monasteries. This work called for an expert scholar and bibliographic genius. Aretin was both. Furthermore, Aretin was the right choice for the commissioner's position because his attitude toward secularization was sound according to progressive government standards in the new Bavaria.¹⁶

The other commissioners appointed to accompany Aretin on the "literary journey" were Paul Hupfauer, a cleric and professor in the Bavarian state university, who was to make a selection for the university at Landshut, and Johann Schubauer, a councilor of the state board

of education, whose assignment was to earmark suitable material for the school libraries.¹⁷

Aretin informs us in his *Beyträge zur Geschichte und Literatur* of the detailed instructions which the library commissioners had to follow. They are set down in seven paragraphs and contain the following directions:

1. The libraries as charted are to be inspected as quickly as possible, and every commissioner is to segregate whatever he deems useful, whereupon he is to have the books he selected packed separately.

2. Two lists are to be prepared, which must be signed by the commissioners. One list is to be given to the local commissioner in every monastery together with the catalog.

3. Such books as are chosen in one monastery may not again be taken in another unless there are several editions of a book or unless for a specific literary reason duplicates are advisable.

4. The local commissioner must be told of books which contain superstition or any other injurious content, since they may not be sold at auction.

5. If natural history collections or antiques or especially good musical instruments and music materials are found, they may be considered like the book materials.

6. Whenever copper plate or wood engravings are contained in books with texts, it must be decided whether the latter or the former is the principal feature. Whenever the text is the main feature, the book must be sent to the library, otherwise to the cabinet of engravings.

7. Manuscripts and book materials in collegiate abbeys are, for the time being, only to be listed, since they have not yet been dissolved,¹⁸ and a copy of the list is to be turned in.¹⁹

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, Part I, 88.

¹⁸ The decree to dissolve collegiate abbeys was signed by the Elector on July 29, 1803 (see A. Kluckhohn, "Aus dem handschriftlichen Nachlasse L. Westenrieders: Denkwürdigkeiten und Tagebücher," *Abhandlungen der historischen Klasse der königlich bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, XVI, Part II [München: Verlag der kgl. Akademie, 1882], 74).

¹⁹ J. C. von Aretin, *op. cit.*, I, Part I, 88-89.

¹⁵ Milkau and Leyh, *op. cit.*, p. 590.

¹⁶ Utterances such as are on record in J. C. von Aretin, *op. cit.*, I, Part I, 98-99, and Part V, 99, prove this point.

Before Aretin and his associates left on their mission, several decisions were reached in a final meeting under the chairmanship of Oberhofbibliothekar Häffelin. It was agreed:

1. The three-man commission was to travel together and make its inspections together, and Bernhart of the library staff (who, according to Aretin, possessed a wide knowledge of incunabula) was to be a consultant.

2. Materials to be earmarked for the Hofbibliothek were to include (a) manuscripts, (b) incunabula, and (c) other rare and valuable book materials; however, if duplicates of the *b* and *c* materials were found, they were to be given to the university library; this library was also to have whatever manuscript material was necessary for illustrative purposes in the study of diplomatics. No literary rarities were to be set aside for the schools but only current material and whatever books might be useful in teaching.

3. Ignatz Schmid, a secular priest, was to take charge of listing and sorting duplicates at the Hofbibliothek.

4. The proper agency of government was to be petitioned for permission to visit (a) the former Jesuit libraries at Amberg, Biburg, Burghausen, etc., which by the order of July 28, 1789, came into possession of the Hofbibliothek but had not been transferred as yet; (b) several libraries in the new territories, as, for example, at Passau and Keyzersheim.

5. The agency was also to be asked to provide suitable quarters for housing the many new acquisitions.²⁰

Aretin and his associates—forty in all—began their search on March 24, 1803, in Munich. Their itinerary included seventy-three monasteries, convents, and other religious institutions within Bavaria. To enumerate all the stopping places is unnecessary,²¹ but Polling may be singled out because of the size of its collection.

In the library of the Augustinian

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 91-92.

²¹ Sensburg lists the monasteries and the number of incunabula, manuscripts, etc., that were taken (*op. cit.*, pp. 71 ff.).

canons at Polling, Aretin stood face to face with over 80,000 volumes, including very valuable and rare materials in every branch.²² The Hofbibliothek was enriched with over 20,000 volumes from this library, including 653 manuscripts and 1,394 incunabula.²³ These figures represent the largest number of volumes selected in any one library by Aretin. His colleague Hupfauer claimed 7,354 volumes for the university library, and Schubauer took 2,500 volumes.²⁴ Of the remaining 50,000 volumes, 123 hundred-weight were sold as waste for 85 florins.²⁵

Books continued to come in from the monasteries until 1817. By that time the seventy-three monasteries in Altbayern and another eighty institutions in greater Bavaria had yielded 700,000 volumes, according to estimates made.

It may be assumed that the stock of manuscripts and incunabula in the monasteries on Aretin's list had almost all been attached.²⁶ We note, however, that "by far the greatest part of the more modern literature had been scattered or destroyed."²⁷ But at Oberaltaich and Niederaltaich, for example, the "neueste Literatur," according to Aretin, was carefully selected.²⁸

Georg Leyh joins the chorus of dissatisfied bibliophiles who have castigated Aretin for leaving valuable treasures behind in various monasteries. Rottenbuch, Kaisheim, and Indersdorf are singled out as examples of Aretin's negligence.²⁹ What Leyh and others before him forgot

²² J. C. von Aretin, *op. cit.*, I, Part V, 89.

²³ Sensburg, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

²⁴ Milkau and Leyh, *op. cit.*, p. 588.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.* ²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ J. C. von Aretin, *op. cit.*, IV, Part VI, 621.

²⁹ Milkau and Leyh, *op. cit.*, p. 588.

were the orders under which Aretin had to act.³⁰

For having safeguarded and centralized a vast treasure so that it might be made available to the world of scholars, Aretin received little thanks in his own day or later. Contemporary critics refused to recognize the thoroughness with which he had carried out the work and assailed him for amassing a mountain of books only as high as the Bavarian Alps but not so high as the Himalayas. They accused Aretin of negligence and held him responsible for mistakes which were made by some of the local commissioners assigned to the monasteries.³¹

Mention of these matters suggests a statement about Aretin's working method as head commissioner. He was a man of phenomenal memory. In this respect he resembled Van Praet, whose sobriquet came to be "le vivant catalogue," since he alone knew what books had come in from the secularized monasteries and where each book was. Aretin, like his distinguished colleague in Paris, knew all the incunabula and every manuscript in the Hofbibliothek. He relied on this knowledge when making his selection in the monastic libraries. What is more he knew exactly what he wanted when he came to each monastery, as is so graphically shown in the *Beyträge*.³² From the lists of such library visitors as

Gercken, Zapf, Petz, and others, Aretin made a mental chart of the location of valuable monastic treasures. He knew at first glance whether the Hofbibliothek contained the incunabula, manuscripts, and other materials in a certain monastic collection and whether a given volume was to be set aside for Munich or not. His overconfidence in his retentive powers, however, made it appear unnecessary to Aretin to draw up inventories at the various libraries. As a result, no doubt, some irreplaceable materials were lost. However, since Commissioners Hupfauer and Schubauer went through the same stock, oversights may not have been numerous. The critics did not realize that whatever it was that failed to reach Munich did not prevent the Hofbibliothek from becoming one of the largest libraries of the world in less than a year, mainly because of Aretin's knowledge of books, his zeal, and his national pride.

To accuse Aretin of negligence and to blame him for the errors of others is also unfair. A statement by Aretin contained in a memorandum addressed to the Library Administration Commission, dated September 18, 1807, sheds light on the matter in question. It relates a tragic episode at the monastery at Rottenbuch, where practically the whole collection—in accord with instructions that no duplicates were to be taken, the commissioners had picked out only a few rarities—was sold to a paper manufacturer by the local official in charge of the monastery.³³ Not Aretin but the system which neglected to institute efficient control measures was at fault. Michael Doeberl, the dean of Bavarian historiographers, points out in this connection that, since the

³⁰ J. C. von Aretin, *op. cit.*, I, Part I, 88–89.

³¹ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 89.

³² The Tegernsee incident is especially illuminating. Here the monks had secreted various treasures, but upon checking the collection Aretin noticed at once that the rarest volumes had been removed. What he wanted among other things was "a manuscript from the Merovingian period, manuscripts from the eighth, ninth, and tenth centuries, three of the earliest printed volumes, several parchment printed books, and the oldest incunabula." Aretin demanded insistently that the secreted material be brought out of hiding, and it was (J. C. von Aretin, *op. cit.*, I, Part II, 55 ff.).

³³ A. Hilsenbeck, "Eine Denkschrift Aretins über die bayerischen Provinzialbibliotheken," *Aufsätze Fritz Milkau gewidmet* (Leipzig: Karl W. Hiersemann, 1921), p. 156.

Montgelas government had to take over a very inferior grade of state employee, such a tragedy and the various excesses which occurred could be expected.³⁴

Personnel considerations enter the picture in several ways. Thus, it may be pointed out that the staff which accompanied Aretin on the tour consisted of only forty men. That his staff was definitely undermanned, therefore, is very apparent. The record does not show that Aretin complained because of this condition. Economy was the watchword of the Montgelas government, which had inherited an empty treasury from its predecessors. Consequently, to have insisted on a larger staff would have been politically unwise as well as futile on the part of the newly advanced provisorischer Oberhofbibliothekar.

The time element also must be considered when evaluating the work and the method of Aretin's commission. He and his two associate commissioners planned on completing the work of book selection at the seventy-three Bavarian monasteries in three to four tours in accord with the letter and the spirit of their instructions "to search the libraries in the shortest possible time."³⁵ The following schedule was actually carried out: first tour, March 24 to May 24; second tour, June 13 to September 16; third tour, October 28 to November 19; fourth tour, November 20 to 29.³⁶ This schedule indicates clearly that the time set aside for the huge task of selecting many thousands of volumes was insufficient. Under such circumstances, it was natural that in the selection process some really important manuscripts and books would escape notice and be left behind. Aretin himself indicates how speedily the com-

mission did its work when he says they "flew" through the libraries.³⁷ Within the period from October 28 to November 7, for example, Aretin and his assistants had made selections at five different monasteries.³⁸ These Aretin described as being less important (yield: seventy-five books and manuscripts); but even if the speed of the searchers was lessened at the more important institutions, as it actually was,³⁹ nevertheless the fact still remains that the eight-month schedule was all too brief for the undertaking.

The process had to be a hurried one, however, in order to forestall unlawful removal or destruction of state property. In several localities rural and town folk alike actually desecrated or destroyed possessions of church and clergy;⁴⁰ and not only service books but also bibliographical materials of even greater value and less frequency fell into impious hands.⁴¹ The other group which had to be reckoned with in connection with book removal was not destructive like the rabble but nevertheless had qualities harmful to the state's bibliographical interests. The group in question constituted the dispossessed tenants of the monasteries. Aretin reports attempts on the part of the monks to conceal valuable

³⁷ *Ibid.*, V, Part IV, 430.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Because of the considerable incunabula treasure at Passau, for example, Aretin remained behind to complete the selection while his assistants were sent to three small near-by monasteries. The work at Passau required several weeks (cf. *ibid.*, pp. 398 and 420).

⁴⁰ Scheglmann gives the erroneous impression that secularization in most places in Bavaria was accompanied by deeds of barbarism (cf. A. Scheglmann, *Geschichte der Säkularisation im rechtsrheinischen Bayern* [Regensburg: J. Habbrel, 1903-6], II, 64 ff.).

⁴¹ G. Laubmann and M. Doeberl, *Denkwürdigkeiten des Grafen Maximilian Joseph von Montgelas über die innere Staatsverwaltung Bayerns (1799-1817)* (München: Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1908), p. li.

³⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 485.

³⁵ J. C. von Aretin, *op. cit.*, I, Part I, 88.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, Vols. I, II, IV, V, VI.

manuscripts and books, as at Tegernsee, and even to remove books by sale.⁴² There can be no doubt that at least some important manuscripts and books were lost to the state in this way. And, since secularization was to be foreseen well in advance in Bavaria, wary monks disposed of individual items in a book collection or parts of collections before their belongings were impounded by the state. Obviously, Aretin cannot be held responsible for these defaults. Instead, his zeal and his success at ferreting out the hidden property of the commonwealth deserve recognition. But the anti-Aretin faction has chosen not to mention the tenacity with which the chief commissioner succeeded in discovering some of the greatest riches to be brought to the Hofbibliothek—riches which would otherwise have been lost.

That Aretin was zealous in his mission can be seen from the Tegernsee episode, which proves clearly that the chief commissioner knew not only what he wanted but how to get it even when it had been made to disappear. He acted in accord with his conviction that the larger community should profit from the resources accessible only to the few.⁴³ As an ardent opponent of isolationism in the book world, he translated his philosophy into a tangible realism while on tour of the monastic institutions, but without recourse to force or brutality.

There is also indication that Aretin exercised due care in distinguishing between public and private book property. When the monasteries were secularized, their book collections automatically became national property, which entitled Aretin, Hupfauer, and Schubauer to send to Munich whatever they selected from these collections. At Weiher, Aretin's

⁴² Doeberl, *op. cit.*, p. 486.

⁴³ J. C. von Aretin, *op. cit.*, I, Part II, 55 ff.

integrity was tested. Here was housed Professor Kirchmaier's large private collection valued at several thousand gulden and including some of the most valuable and finest editions of the classics. Since the name engraved in the books indicated private ownership, Aretin did not claim the collection. Kirchmaier's collection is in Munich today, as Aretin tells us in his *Beyträge*, because the professor's generosity and interest in promoting the common good led him to present his library to the Hofbibliothek.⁴⁴

In fine, after examining the evidence, all doubts about how Aretin handled the assignment of 1803 disappear. In fact, a recent surveyor of the library scene considered Aretin's workmanship while on his historic mission practically flawless.⁴⁵

It was one thing to select the books in the monastic libraries for transfer to the Hofbibliothek and yet another to provide adequate storage for a quarter of a million or more volumes, to process them, and to make them accessible to the research scholar. Before and during Aretin's "literary journey," space in the Hofbibliothek was much reduced by the acquisition of Elector Karl Theodore's Mannheim library numbering over 100,000 volumes. Thus Aretin's plea to the government in March, 1803, for adequate storage facilities was indeed necessary.⁴⁶ When the avalanche of books began to descend upon the Munich library, that reservoir was soon filled to capacity. Garrets and cellars were pressed into service, and one-third of the books were crowded under the rafters of St. Michaels, a church edifice adjoining the li-

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 52-53

⁴⁵ A. Hessel, *Geschichte der Bibliotheken* (Göttingen: Pellens & Co., 1925), trans. E. Heyse Dummer (Graduate Library School, University of Chicago, 1943), p. 98.

⁴⁶ J. C. von Aretin, *op. cit.*, I, Part I, 92.

brary. The problem of storage was a difficult one, but it was exceeded in difficulty by organizational and cataloging problems. Häffelin did not succeed in solving the riddle. Aretin might have done so had his plans, which expert opinion of today has pronounced excellent, been accepted by the Ministry, which had to pass on them.⁴⁷ Why official consent was withheld has not been divulged. There are reasons to believe that Aretin's suggestions required three essentials which could not be made available—trained personnel, improved working conditions and locale, and, most of all, funds to finance the project.⁴⁸

When Aretin became permanent head in 1806, his most important problem was to bring order out of chaos and make a great collection useful. Whatever memorandums on solving the problem of classification and cataloging the new director may have sent to the Ministry were not acted upon, since the question of organizational procedure was to be answered in connection with the reorganization of the Academy scheduled for 1807.⁴⁹ Instead, a provisional plan of work (*provisorischer Geschäftsplan*) was put into operation on April 13, 1806.

Aretin felt that if his library was to be a service institution, these masses of books would have to be made accessible and in as short a time as possible. Since these books were chiefly of interest to humanists. Aretin believed that subject classification, which the humanist does not consider important,⁵⁰ would not be

desirable. He therefore decided on an alphabetical author catalog and put production into high gear. Five separate catalogs resulted, filling 124 folio volumes. Friedrich Jacobs, a patron of the library and later a member of the Bibliothek-Administrations-Kommission, states in a letter⁵¹ to J. W. Hamberger, who was later to be called to assist Aretin, that some twenty people were at work on the cataloging project. He complains, however, that the work was being done carelessly. Thus he found that *Iustiniani Caesaris Institutiones* was confused with the works of Julius Caesar and that a host of similar errors were being made.

The status of the Hofbibliothek at the end of the first year of operations according to the *provisorischer Geschäftsplan* was reported to the recently appointed Bibliothek-Administrations-Kommission⁵² by a Professor Stolz, upon request. Stolz does not find much to praise in his "Beiträge zur Kenntnis der königlichen Hof- und Zentralbibliothek nebst einigen auf diesen Gegenstand Bezug habenden Vorschlägen. Vom 25. September 1807." According to Stolz, only the collection of the presecularization period and a part of the Mannheim collection, which soon after the demise of its founder, Elector Karl Theodore, was annexed to that of Munich, had been properly arranged and given call numbers. Inaccuracies, moreover, had crept into the processing, which seemed not to

⁵¹ Reprinted by E. Petzet in "Die Münchener Staatbibliothek vor 100 Jahren," *Beilage zur Allgemeinen Zeitung*, No. 225 (December, 1907), p. 422.

⁵² When the Munich Academy was reorganized on May 1, 1807, we hear of the Bibliothek-Administrations-Kommission for the first time. Through this agency the Academy was to govern the Hofbibliothek. The chairman of the commission was always to be the Oberhofbibliothekar. One of its five members was always to be the president of the Academy. Of course, as head of the Academy, the president was the Oberhofbibliothekar's superior.

⁴⁷ Hilsenbeck, *op. cit.*, p. 154.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ A. Hilsenbeck, "Martin Schrettinger und die Aufstellung in der kgl. Hof- und Staatsbibliothek München," *Zentralblatt für Bibliothekswesen*, XXXI (1914), 409.

⁵⁰ P. Butler, "The Research Worker's Approach to Books—the Humanist," in William M. Randall (ed.), *The Acquisition and Cataloging of Books* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1940), p. 282.

have followed a clear and logical plan. Instead of one uniform author catalog, there were five. The catalog for the Mannheim collection was superior to the other four. The catalog for the monastic collections was still in process, with seventy folio volumes completed. All sorts of clerical help had been hired to copy titles on a piecework basis, each title netting one kreuzer. Our informant remarks parenthetically that the staff looked more sharply at the kreuzers than at the titles. He felt that the Mannheim collection should have been shelved separately and was vexed by a staff member with the title of "Hofrat" whom he found to be wholly unfamiliar with library procedure. In concluding his report Stolz records the opinion that the Hofbibliothek was being run in a hit-or-miss manner and that the unsatisfactory conditions noticeable in this great book depot would have to be remedied.⁵³

The report of a Professor Keyser submitted to the commission, bearing the title "Ueber den gegenwärtigen Zustand der kgl. Bibliothek zu München vom 31. September 1807," is no more favorable than the Stolz report. Keyser declares that the catalogs, excepting probably that of the Mannheim collection, had serious weaknesses both in content and in method. He believes:

They do not serve to show the way but are misleading, prepared by incompetent and inefficient persons. A revision has been begun which, however, is wholly futile since this is a catalog in which one cannot trust any entry because every author, title, place name, year of publication, format, yes, every letter is unreliable.

The writer asserts that a thorough revision entails a comparison of the vol-

⁵³ Quoted by Hilsenbeck, "Martin Schrettinger und die Aufstellung in der kgl. Hof- und Staatsbibliothek München," pp. 410-11.

ume with the title entry and implies that such a procedure is not being followed. He deplores the lack of certainty in organizational planning and the vacillation in practice which, according to Keyser, could lead only to "Desorganisation."⁵⁴

From Aretin's immediate superior, Jacobi, the head of the Munich Academy,⁵⁵ we hear both criticism and praise. Jacobi admits that Aretin took his work seriously and was constantly striving to master the situation at the Hofbibliothek. He mentions the various attempts by Aretin to make the great collection usable. His innovations, however, were of his own invention, since he was a very independent person and took counsel with no one on the staff. He believed in quick results and expected that his untried methods would produce them promptly in all departments of the library. According to Jacobi, the outcome was unsatisfactory; for, as he words it: "Chaos resulted instead of the order which Aretin feverishly desired and worked for and which was expected to ensue speedily in every department of the library."⁵⁶ Jacobi does not underestimate the huge task which devolved upon the chief librarian's shoulders. He realizes that Aretin's staff was limited; and, although he makes no direct mention of the scarcity of funds for library purposes—a factor partly responsible for some of the unpleasant hues in the gen-

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 411-12. This report is a part of the Akademie-Archiv.

⁵⁵ The North German philosopher, F. H. Jacobi, accepted the Elector's call to help organize the Munich Academy in 1804. Several of his friends were drawn to Munich soon thereafter. His biographer, Zirngiebl, states that he accepted the offer for financial reasons (cf. E. Zirngiebl, *F. H. Jacobi's Leben, Dichten und Denken* [Wien, 1867], p. 117).

⁵⁶ Quoted by Hilsenbeck, "Martin Schrettinger und die Aufstellung in der kgl. Hof- und Staatsbibliothek München," p. 412.

eral picture—he most certainly must have been aware of it.⁵⁷ Whatever was accomplished despite these shortcomings Jacobi is able to praise when he says: “If one considers the size of the task and that only a small number of workers were on hand, it is only fair to praise what was accomplished under the circumstances.”⁵⁸ In his next statement Jacobi speaks of the “serious shortcomings” which retarded book delivery. It usually required “a few days” to locate a book, and so he concludes that the library was useful only to patrons who possessed patience.

These observations were incorporated in a report sent to Montgelas by Jacobi on October 11, 1807, including also the opinion that Aretin was handicapped as an administrator because he lacked technical experience. Jacobi states that such experience could have been acquired had Aretin studied a great library’s organization and mechanism. Had Jacobi not been told that Aretin had spent a year in Paris to observe the Bibliothèque Nationale in operation? He probably had, but to him, the Prussian, Göttingen was superior to Paris—a point of view enunciated in the very document under consideration, where he recommends that Aretin study the Göttingen system for six weeks *in situ!*

From a member of Aretin’s staff we also hear criticism. Custos Martin Schrettinger censures his superior (1) for improper delegation of power, (2) for ignoring line and staff functions, and (3) for causing a decline in staff morale as a result of his negative attitude toward organizational relationships.⁵⁹ The experience of

⁵⁷ At this time the Hofbibliothek’s budget was 6,000 florins (cf. “Bayerische Staatsbibliothek,” *Minerva Handbücher: Die Bibliotheken*, Vol. I: *Deutsches Reich*, p. 547).

⁵⁸ Quoted by Hilsenbeck, “Martin Schrettinger und die Aufstellung in der kgl. Hof- und Staatsbibliothek München,” p. 412.

administration has always been that these fundamentals may not suffer infringement,⁶⁰ and thus Schrettinger’s charge reveals a serious shortcoming in Aretin’s administrative practice.

When Aretin entered the directorship of the Hofbibliothek in 1806, he was confronted also by a personnel problem. He took charge of a staff of fourteen members.⁶¹ The discussion has already shown that the size of the staff and the size of the job were wholly disproportionate. The fact may now be added that this disparity was magnified by the lack of professional ability of various regular staff members. Stolz, as will be remembered, called attention to the inefficiency of a staff member. In his report to the Ministry, Jacobi also directed attention to the problem of personnel. He considered only two members of the staff professionally qualified—the ex-monk Martin Schrettinger, whose rank was that of Custos, and B. J. Docen, ranked as Scriptor. Aretin also valued the services of Schrettinger highly, but his rating of Docen is not known.⁶² Both staff members, however, were possessed of sufficient scholarship in the estimation of their chief to have some of their work included in his *Beyträge*. The same privilege was accorded Ignaz Hardt, deputy librarian and Greek manuscript cataloger, as well as J. B. Bernhart, Custos and incunabulist. Hardt was Aretin’s

⁵⁹ Milkau und Leyh, *op. cit.*, p. 614; also Hilsenbeck, “Martin Schrettinger und die Aufstellung in der kgl. Hof- und Staatsbibliothek München,” p. 413.

⁶⁰ M. Dimock, “The Place of Organization in Institutional Development,” in C. B. Joeckel (ed.), *Current Issues in Library Administration* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1939), p. 87.

⁶¹ On January 20, 1811, it was reduced to ten members (cf. Milkau und Leyh, *op. cit.*, p. 613).

⁶² Hilsenbeck, “Martin Schrettinger und die Aufstellung in der kgl. Hof- und Staatsbibliothek München,” p. 412.

protege,⁶³ and Bernhart's ability as an incunabulist drew praise from Aretin as early as 1803.⁶⁴ Joseph Scherer, deputy librarian, stood in the good graces of Aretin, who employed him in 1806 and gave him a place in the library where he could use his knowledge of oriental languages.⁶⁵ What Aretin thought of the remainder of the staff—Custos Wigard, Custos Schmid, Unter-Custos Rhein, Secretary Schrankello, and Scriptor Roth—cannot be ascertained. It is interesting to note, however, that at least three men in addition to the two whom Jacobi thought professionally qualified, had merited Aretin's approval.

The relationship of the staff problem to the cataloging problem in the Aretin administration can be stated briefly. Hardt, Scherer, Bernhart, and Docen were scholars and specialists whose interests were not in general cataloging and the main author catalog but wholly in working on the manuscript stocks and making them accessible. Thus the specialist's work of cataloging the manuscript treasures was distributed as follows: Hardt, Greek; Scherer, oriental; Docen, Germanic. Bernhart had charge of the incunabula. Aretin, as we shall see later, took an important part in cataloging the manuscript collection.

The only able man left on Aretin's staff to interest himself in the production of the general catalog was Schrettinger. But by an irony of fate Schrettinger was not chosen by the Bibliothek-Administrations-Kommission to catalog the Munich collection. His "failing" was that he had not been trained in the Göttingen tradition. In his textbook Schrettinger

avored an alphabetical author catalog, which to the Göttingen circle was heretical.⁶⁶ In those days many thought bibliothecal salvation could come only via Göttingen. Surely, it was not merely a phrase coined by the general secretary of the Munich Academy when he wrote regarding the system of subject cataloging evolved at Göttingen: "For the past fifty years Germany has coupled with this name the concept of exemplary bibliothecal achievement."⁶⁷ The man who was called in 1808 to undertake the subject cataloging at the Hofbibliothek was the Göttingen-trained librarian, Julius Wilhelm Hamberger.

It is obvious that the problems which Aretin faced when he became Oberhofbibliothekar would have taxed even the ingenuity and resourcefulness of the best of administrators in our own day. Aretin's superior, Jacobi, in his report to Montgelas says as much in these words: "How to cope with the lack of space and personnel would have baffled even the most expert administrator. If these factors are properly considered, one cannot refrain from praise and surprise over what has been accomplished even now."⁶⁸ The incumbent in the Hofbibliothek in 1806, however, had to be more than an able administrator. The duties of the office required a man who was at once a scholar, an administrator, and a library technician—qualifications which even now are found only infrequently in the same person.

Aretin was not a trained library technician. His choice resulted, no doubt, from the belief that it is easier to add technical training to scholarship than scholarship

⁶³ Erwein von Aretin, *op. cit.*, p. 126.

⁶⁴ J. C. von Aretin, *op. cit.*, I, Part I, 91.

⁶⁵ C. Moll, *Mitteilungen aus dem Briefwechsel des Freiherrn Carl von Moll* (Augsburg, 1829-35), IV, 1165-70.

⁶⁶ Hilsenbeck, "Martin Schrettinger und die Aufstellung in der kgl. Hof- und Staatsbibliothek München," p. 415.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 413.

⁶⁸ Erwein von Aretin, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

to technical training. Aretin was undoubtedly a scholar. His scholarly ability showed itself not only in the manner previously stated but also in the field of descriptive bibliography. In describing the manuscript holdings of the Hofbibliothek he rendered a lasting service to the world of scholars. And with that project he paved the way for the work of an able successor in office a half-century later—the distinguished philologist, Karl Halm (1857–82).⁶⁹ That Aretin the scholar was in his real element while making the manuscript treasures known to the learned world through descriptive bibliography can also be seen from the nine volumes of his *Beyträge zur Geschichte und Literatur, vorzüglich aus den Schätzen der pfalz-bayerischen Centralbibliothek zu München*. Consequently, Hilsenbeck can speak very highly of Aretin's scholarly efforts as to "wissenschaftliche Erschließung" of the Munich manuscript collection.⁷⁰

Recognition by the Bavarian government of Aretin the scholar was not long in coming. He was properly rewarded not in a monetary way but by being elevated in the hierarchy of scholars. The rank accorded him upon completion of the assignment in 1803 was that of vice-president of the Academy⁷¹ and in 1807 that of secretary of the Philologisch-Philosophische Klasse.⁷²

There remains but a brief review of the

⁶⁹ M. Burton, *Famous Libraries of the World: Their History, Collections, and Administration* (London: Grafton & Co., 1937), p. 183.

⁷⁰ "Martin Schrettinger und die Aufstellung in der kgl. Hof- und Staatsbibliothek. München," p. 409.

⁷¹ Erwein von Aretin, *op. cit.*, p. 29; also F. Jacobs, *Personalien* (Leipzig: Dyksche Buchhandlung, 1840), p. 84.

⁷² *Denkschriften der königlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu München für das Jahr 1808*, pp. x and xxi.

library policies advocated by Aretin. Aretin was interested in centralizing at the Hofbibliothek all rarities, incunabula, and manuscripts held by the libraries within the state.⁷³ Although the Bavarian government did not formally adopt Aretin's proposal in a memorandum on centralization sent to the Ministry in 1807, nevertheless it did not restrain the Hofbibliothek from carrying it out when profitable returns were possible.

Aretin also advocated state supervision of libraries.⁷⁴ He thought such a measure all the more urgent since some libraries held requisitioned rarities which were ultimately to be deposited in the Hofbibliothek. The government apparently did not demur.

In 1804 Aretin appeared before the Landesdirektion to propose rural and regional libraries.⁷⁵ In accordance with requests from rural vicars and other potential beneficiaries, he recommended that rural or county authorities be granted the right (1) to make up collections from the residue of library materials at the monasteries within their district, (2) to establish suitable library quarters, (3) to appoint and pay librarians, and (4) to make the collection accessible to the public.

The hopeful pioneer in the field of state library extension in Bavaria visualized the establishment of about seventy libraries throughout the Bavarian countryside. His wish, however, remained unfulfilled. Aretin's motives and plan were commendable, but the reader's demand and interest had not entered his thinking. Obviously, the monastic collections were not gathered from the standpoint

⁷³ Hilsenbeck, "Eine Denkschrift Aretins über die bayerischen Provinzialbibliotheken," p. 154.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 155.

⁷⁵ J. C. von Aretin, *op. cit.*, II, Part V, 73 ff.

of nineteenth-century community interest. What really deterred and immobilized Aretin's crusade for rural libraries, however, seems to have been the problem of space, housing, and staff.⁷⁶

Aretin maintained an interest in regionalism, and in his memorandum of 1807 he advocated an extension of the regional program which was begun under his predecessor.⁷⁷ As a result of this request, Augsburg, Regensburg, Passau, and some smaller localities became regional library centers.

Aretin was ahead of his time in library thinking in that he rejected the view that libraries were to be merely storage places for books and librarians only custodians. He favored unhampered use of the resources of the Hofbibliothek by qualified persons. His plans were to make of the Munich library an exemplary service institution in accord with the promise in his motto, "Munich the book capital of Germany."

Aretin began his career as a lawyer and ended it on the bench of the Circuit Court of Appeals at Amberg in 1824. His directorship of the Hofbibliothek terminated at his request in 1811, but his interest in libraries never ceased.⁷⁸ He left the library scene in Munich fight-

ing Prussian infiltration into Bavarian politics and scholarship and Prussian ridicule of the Bavaria which he idolized. This, the so-called "Academics' War," in which the librarian and his staff and the library and the Munich Academy play a significant part, forms a chapter by itself, however, and must be reserved for a future recording.

The man who withdrew from the directorship of the Hofbibliothek on April 2, 1811, had made a lasting contribution to the institution he loved. The rich stores of manuscripts and incunabula⁷⁹ which he had so diligently assembled are always to be remembered as the central design in the bibliographic fabric of the famous Munich depository. Under Aretin this library sped past the half-million mark. It was to occupy for a century the position of the first library in Germany, and it became one of the world's great libraries. When citing its rank, Aretin's contribution, however, is all too easily overlooked. Although his achievements were noteworthy, the attempt has been made by the pro-Prussian anti-Aretin faction to banish him from print and posterity. He has become the forgotten man in German library history.

⁷⁹ On the basis of Schottenloher's figures, Aretin took in well over five thousand incunabula (cf. K. Schottenloher, "Die Wiegendrucke der kgl. Hof- und Staatsbibliothek in München," *Zentralblatt für Bibliothekswesen*, XXXII [1915], 167-68).

⁷⁶ Milkau and Leyh, *op. cit.*, p. 592.

⁷⁷ J. C. von Aretin, *op. cit.*, II, Part V, 73.

⁷⁸ Sensburg, *op. cit.*, pp. 99-100.