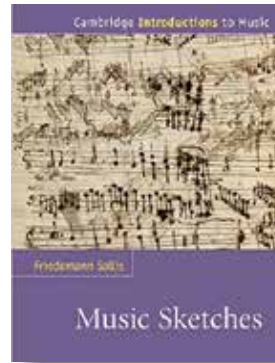




Hollister, Christopher V. *Handbook of Academic Writing for Librarians (rev edn)*. Chicago: ACRL, ALA, 2014. 250pp. ISBN 978 0 8389 8736 0. \$56.



Sallis, Friedmann. *Music Sketches*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015. 280 pp. ISBN 978 0 5216 8554 2. £19.99.

The Nazi's systematic plunder of tens of millions of Jewish books – and stories of tenacity and the finest professional information work in their restitution

THE story of the Nazi burning of Jewish books is all too familiar. What is much less well-known is the story of the Nazi's systematic plunder of collections of tens of millions of Jewish books and their concealment and eventual recovery. This book recounts this fascinating and often tragic story. The recent success of the film *The Monuments Men*, based on the book by Robert M. Edsel,¹ concentrated on recovering art treasures but failed to consider books and literary collections.

Looting of collections

The Nazis recognised that Jewish families and institutions owned many important and valuable books and, spearheaded by Alfred Rosenberg, they methodically set about collecting them for posterity.

The story of how collections throughout Nazi-occupied Europe were looted and then hidden is well illustrated with plenty of examples. For instance, in Vilnius, Lithuanian Jewish workers tried to rescue books and smuggle them into the ghetto. Although the ghetto was subsequently destroyed and they were discovered and executed, some of the books survived and were buried in an underground bunker. This moving story of courage in the face of adversity is typical of what was happening all over Europe.

Although Allied bombing destroyed many of the hidden caches of books, a lot survived. How these books were discovered makes fascinating reading, and their stories are often fraught with complications.

Initially, the United States Army rescued and sorted the books but then worked closely with Jewish

Cultural Restitution Inc. to distribute the books from the warehouses. The main difficulty was identifying the books and deciding what to do with them.

Tracing original owners was extremely difficult and complicated by the post-war political situation in Eastern Europe as well as Soviet anti-Semitism. In some cases, the story was intensely personal: Walter Lackman was reunited with a book that he had left in Germany as a child when his family fled to America.

To place the importance of the looted collections in context, the book begins with a substantial introduction to the history of Jewish literary history with particular reference to the collections at the Strashun Library in Vilnius. Its cruel fate and that of its librarian sets the scene.

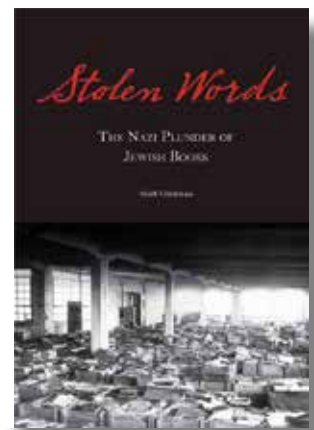
Information work

Immensely readable, this moving and remarkable story reminds the reader that despite the evils that were perpetuated, there is light at the end of the tunnel. The discovery and the process of restitution of these valuable works of Jewish culture is a testimony to tenacity and meticulous detective work. The thorough sorting and classifying of millions of books by an American army archivist is a tribute to professional information work of the finest quality.

¹ Robert M. Edsel with Bret Witter. *The Monuments Men: allied heroes, Nazi thieves and the greatest treasure hunt in history*. London: Preface 2009.

Diana Dixon
Hon Books Review Editor

Glickman, Mark. *Stolen Words: the Nazi plunder of Jewish books*. Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press and Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2016. 312pp. ISBN 978 0 8276 1208 2. \$29.95.



Above: Bonfire May, 1933.
Picture: Bundesarchiv, Bild 102-14597/ Georg Pahl.



Left: Censored prayerbook.
Picture: the Syndics of the Cambridge University Library. CUL Add. 662