

international
c e n t e r
for research
on **anarchism**



CIRA, avenue de Beaumont 24, CH – 1012 Lausanne, Switzerland
(Bus 5 from train station, stop at Hôpital CHUV)
cira@plusloin.org — www.cira.ch
tel. +4121 550 1804 during opening hours.

The CIRA library opens week days from 4 to 7 p.m., or by appointment. It is also a correspondence library: it lends books abroad, sends xeroxes of documents or articles from newspapers and periodicals. It gives information about holdings and current research. It publishes an annual bulletin.

The readers' card entitles for the consulting and loaning of documents (books, etc.) and for the bulletin. It costs 40 Swiss francs or the equivalent of 30 euros a year, payable through the postal account 12-17750-1, CIRA, Geneva, or by bank transfer (no cheques, please; banking details on request).

Support subscription from 100 euros, or 150 Swiss francs

Annual subscription for libraries and institutions: 10 francs.

The library is usually closed in August.

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Welcome to the CIRA !

The CIRA library (Centre international de recherches sur l'anarchisme) collects, preserves and makes available a collection of books, periodicals and documents concerning the anarchist movement, its history, and its ideas. The CIRA is an association under articles 60 *et seq.* of the Swiss Civil Code. An international committee supervises its activity and a local committee runs the center with a group of volunteers. The library is situated in Lausanne, in a leafy setting near the hospital, with premises of 130 m² spread over two floors.



The CIRA has non-profit status (therefore it does not pay taxes nor inheritance taxes) but does not receive any direct public funding nor support. Its running costs are covered by member's fees (reader's cards), by some donations, and by irregular financial help. There is no acquisitions budget: current periodicals are sent directly from the editors; books and documents are given by the authors, the publishers, organizations and friends. It is one of the few non-institutional centers which has such important holdings and which lends and sends books abroad.

History

The International Center for Research on Anarchism was founded in Geneva in 1957, with the idea of preserving and making available to readers a collection that was often kept in poor conditions in attics and in private houses.

The idea was born in 1956 at a meeting between an Italian conscientious objector, a French war resister, a Bulgarian refugee and an elderly Swiss anarchist, former activist at the Ligue d'Action du Bâtiment Geneva. At that time in Geneva there were three dormant collections of anarchist material. They constituted the basis of the CIRA

Spain), that are available. The CIRA takes part in international conferences (such as Venice 1984, São Paulo 1992, Toulouse 1999, Paris 2000) and in local events (at the university, in an alternative cinema, etc.).

Once or twice a year, the CIRA invites friends and supporters to a common meal and a book sale.

For the last thirty years, the CIRA has done its best to network with other libraries and documentation centers, in particular with the FICEDL (International Federation of Anarchist Research and Documentation Centres), to support anarchist bookstores in Latin America or publishers in Russia, to encourage the constitution of archives and their use. It keeps good contacts with institutes of social and labour history, like those in Amsterdam or in Paris.

Next steps

The library and the archives have been professionalised, whilst continuing to be run by (often qualified!) volunteers. Some questions for the future:

- how to keep and preserve old collections and fragile mediums (newspaper, posters, audiovisual...), how to computerize them;
- the referencing and stocking of digital publications and contributions;
- moving the catalogue to an open source software, putting it on-line, standardizing of



the databases;

- collecting documents coming from different social movements, from a less specific anarchism, archiving priorities;
- the possibility of continuing to work as volunteers, the committee renewal, etc.

To move ahead, we need to cooperate with other centers and other projects, to find personal and financial solutions, to carefully examine the possibilities of a financial or material bond with other institutions. We welcome suggestions!



Using CIRA

The CIRA puts different tools at the users' disposal:

- a computerized catalogue: currently, 17,000 bibliographical entries of written, audio or video documents are available at the library; the list is on the website.
- a periodicals catalogue (historic and current), with detailed computerized descriptions (listed on the website)
- partial inventories: iconography, posters, printed archives, videos and DVDs, audio-cassettes and CDs, manuscripts.
- files (individual, by theme and by country) and partial card index of articles in magazines and periodicals.
- specialized bibliographies (on people or themes) upon request.

The annual bulletin contains the list of new acquisitions and information on different resources.

A photocopier is available. The audio and visual recordings, as well as the images, can be duplicated under certain conditions. Users buy a reading card (subscription), which currently costs 40 Swiss francs or 30 Euros a year (there are about 150 users). The editors and authors of books or periodicals who send their publications to the CIRA receive information in exchange. For a long time, the CIRA received an average of 300 new titles, 300 visits, wrote 300 letters

and lent 300 books yearly. With the arrival of the internet, the on-line catalogue, email and on-line publications, statistics are obviously harder to keep. The CIRA is well indexed by internet search engines.

Who comes to the CIRA

University and high school students, researchers, journalists, activists, passers-by, etc. Daniel Guérin, Paul Avrich and many other historians have used the CIRA's resources. Also friends who stop for a chat or a cup of tea, who organize a concert or a debate. And all those who work at the CIRA: trainees, people doing their "civilian service" (instead of going to the Army), passing students, punctual help cataloguing documents in Japanese or Yiddish. And sometimes their friends or their children.

What does the CIRA do

On top of the everyday services and the interminable cataloguing, the CIRA sometimes publishes books or pamphlets (the first French translation of *About Anarchism*, by Nicolas Walter, *Un siècle de chansons, Les anarchistes à l'écran/ Anarchists on Screen*, the memoirs of André Bösiger and those of Swiss militiamen in the Spanish Revolution). It puts together exhibitions (antimilitarism, anarchist women, anti-authoritarian education,

library: the whole collections of *Le Réveil anarchiste* (a magazine published in Geneva by Luigi Bertoni) from 1900 to 1947, magazines and publications that had been exchanged, as well as the Germinal Library coming from a former local anarchist group. The library grew with donations, bequests, exchanges and editorial donations.

For six years, Pietro Ferrua ran the library in a rented room until he was deported from Switzerland, in connection with an anti-Francoist attack on the Spanish consulate in Geneva in February 1961. In 1964, the CIRA was transferred to Lausanne into a room of the family boarding house in Beaumont kept by Marie-Christine Mikhaïlo. At this time Marie-Christine ran the library, along with her daughter Marianne Enckell. The CIRA returned to Geneva from 1975 to 1989 before coming back to its current address, into premises purpose-built with the help of friends and supporters.

The catalogue, produced by activists without any library training until 1985, then becomes "professional". It now uses a systematic index file (the diploma work of Anne Cassani) purpose built, listing the recurrent themes in books by anarchists or on anarchism and specific time periods. The catalogue is computerized in 1995 and the collection is now almost completely catalogued.



The origins of donations are not always known and archives often scattered. Some of them, however, come from important local acquisitions: about one hundred volumes of the former Maison du Peuple of Lausanne were purchased from the local library in 1963, which donated some others in 2006. Activists from the region or their families (Jacques Gross, Léon Berchtold, Henri Baud, Willy Widmann, Auguste Fornerod, Lucien Tronchet, Peter Fuchs, Gaston Gremaud) also donated books and periodicals. A number of exchanges were made with other anarchist documentation centers abroad or with other archives of the labour movement. However, many of the older books and documents are in such a poor state that they only can be consulted in the library in Lausanne.



The CIRA collection consists of printed documents in over thirty languages. The best represented language is French (approximately 5000 titles), followed by Italian, Spanish, English and German; far behind come Swedish, Portuguese, Yiddish, Chinese, Russian, Esperanto, etc.

– 16 000 books and brochures

Recent acquisitions come from publishers and authors. Many thanks to all of them! Amongst the older documents, a number of titles in English (Tom Keell Collection) were donated to the CIRA by his widow in 1970. About the same time, a set of books in Yiddish were given by the last editors of the magazine *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* (New York). Works in German or in Portuguese (Brazil), hidden during the periods of dictatorship, were saved by activists and sent to the CIRA. In 1994, half of the collections of the library of the Asociación Isaac Puente (Vitoria, Spain) was donated to the CIRA, the other half to the Fundación Anselmo Lorenzo (Madrid).

– 4000 periodicals, 200 of them still publishing

Some of the collections are significant: the English newspaper *Freedom*, since its creation in 1886; *Le Réveil – Il Risveglio* of Geneva (1900-1947); *Le Libertaire* (Paris) since its creation in 1895 and its metamor-



phoses (*Le Monde libertaire*); *L'Adunata dei Refrattari*, published in Italian in the United States from 1922 to 1971 by “anti-organisationists”, as well as the main magazines of the anarchist movement since 1939. A series of newspapers published by Pierre-Joseph Proudhon in 1848-1849 were found in France in the 1960s under the floor of a house that was being renovated; so saved, they were brought to the CIRA. Periodicals published during the Spanish revolution (1936-1939) are not many but they enclose several rarities.

Some examples of the main magazines: *La Revista blanca* (Barcelona), *Volontà* (Milano), *Défense de l'Homme* (France), *Anarchy* (London), *Die Internationale* (Berlin-Amsterdam) as well as a few reprints. There is also a beautiful collection (put together by Solon Amoros) of the first newspapers and leaflets published by anar-

chists in Spain in 1976-77, as well as countless mimeographed bulletins and other fanzines in all languages.

– ephemera and archives

The largest collection concerns Switzerland: documents related to Ernest Cœurderoy, Mikhail Bakunin, Luigi Bertoni, Carlo Frigerio, Lucien Tronchet, to the Groupe du Réveil and the Groupe Ravachol (Geneva), to youth movements since 1967, to squats and infoshops, among others.

Concerning France, we have an important collection about May 68, internal papers of organizations, numerous flyers and press cuttings about cities or events.

Bulletins and documents concerning the Spanish movement in exile from 1939 to 1976, its constituents and splits fill a dozen boxes, as well as the archives of international coordinations since 1945.

The other collections are more disparate.

Some important personal archives: E. Armand, Louis Mercier, Higinio Noja Ruiz, as well as photocopies of all the articles published by Peter Kropotkin, interviews by Claire Auzias in Lyon, documents of the

Living Theatre from its origins to 1985, and last but not least, CIRA's own archives (50 years of correspondence).

Other collections:

- **VHS and DVD recordings**, films, documentaries, interviews, etc. A database was put together and currently consists of 1500 films where anarchists or allusions to anarchism are shown; it is accessible on-line, as well as partly printed (*Les anarchistes à l'écran, Anarchists on Screen, 1901-2003*, CIRA bulletin 60, 2004). The CIRA owns 450 of these recordings, of variable quality, mostly due to the collaboration with Eric Jarry and David Doillon and to donations from directors.

- **some 200 audio recordings** (cassette and CD), as well as lyrics and scores of songs (the most well known of them were published in a booklet: *Un siècle de chansons / A Century of Songs*, CIRA bulletin 52, 1996).

- **an iconographic collection** (postcards, pictures, various illustrations) and 2000 posters, described in a database and partially computerized (about fifty original posters from the Spanish Revolution), as well as some original prints (Félix Vallotton, Enrico Baj, Flavio Constantini, David Orange).