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## ***Jella Lepman. New perspectives on her life and work***

### **Anniversary conference**

International Youth Library, Blutenburg Castle  
4. – 5. September 2024

To date, there has not been any comprehensive examination of Jella Lepman's life and work. First and foremost, it is Jella Lepman's personal testimonies, especially her autobiographical account "The Bridge of Children's Books", that have shaped the public image of the founder of the International Youth Library and the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY) and continue to do so to this day.

Little is known however about how Jella Lepman lived and what she did during the Weimar Republic, when she worked as an editor for the daily newspaper "Stuttgarter Neues Tagblatt" and founded and edited a women's supplement. At that time, she was involved in politics with the centre-left liberal German Democratic Party (DDP) in Stuttgart and was friends with numerous fellow party members who, after 1945, were to contribute to the establishment of the Federal Republic of Germany, including Theodor Heuss.

We know next to nothing about Jella Lepman's years in exile in London, where initially she stayed afloat financially doing odd jobs, and later worked for the BBC. During this time, she wrote the essay "Women in Nazi Germany", published under a pseudonym, in which she portrayed German society in the Weimar Republic and during the first years after 1933, focusing on the role of women. Likewise, there is hardly any information about her private life, friendships, and relationships. Very few diaries, personal letters, or other private documents have survived in public archives or in the International Youth Library.

Reasonably well-documented is the post-war period, with Jella Lepman's work for the American regulatory authority, her struggles with founding the International Youth Library, her commitment to the library during its early years, her role in establishing IBBY, and her relationship with Erich Kästner. However, even this phase of her life is mostly accounted for on a mere descriptive level. A thorough examination of Jella Lepman's literary works, of her concept of childhood, of her Jewish identity, or her relationship with her American employers is still lacking.

On the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the International Youth Library, this conference will attempt to take a fresh look at Jella Lepman's life and oeuvre and, for the first time, to shed light on lesser-known and unknown aspects of her personality and achievements.

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Organiser: International Youth Library Foundation  
Concept and host/leader: Christiane Raabe

## **Wednesday, 4. September 2024**

11:00                      Official opening of the conference. Welcome address

### *Part 1: Stuttgart, London, Munich: Landmarks in Jella Lepman's life*

11.15 – 12.00            **Verantwortlich für den Text – Jella Lepman als Redakteurin der Frauenbeilage des „Stuttgarter Neues Tagblatts“ von 1927 bis 1933**  
[Responsible for the text – Jella Lepman as editor of the women's supplement of the "Stuttgarter Neues Tagblatt" from 1927 to 1933]  
Irene Ferchl (Stuttgart)

12.00 – 12.45            **Exile in London, 1936-1945: Jella Lepman as author of "Women in Nazi Germany" and her collaboration with British and American services**  
Daniel Siemens (Newcastle)

### ***Lunch break – Guided tour through the Walter Trier-Exhibition***

14.00 – 14.45            **Die wechselvolle Geschichte von Arthur Schnitzlers Nachlass und Jella Lepmans Rolle im Fälschungskrimi von Cambridge**  
[The changeful history of Arthur Schnitzler's estate and Jella Lepman's role in the Cambridge forgery]  
Kristina Fink und Olivia Varwig (Wuppertal.)

14.45 – 15.30            **Liebe Jella! Lieber Max! Der Briefwechsel zwischen Jella Lepman und ihrem Cousin Max Horkheimer**  
[Dear Jella! Dear Max! The correspondence between Jella Lepman and her famous cousin Max Horkheimer]  
Anna Becchi (Genoa)

### ***Coffee break***

16.00– 16.45            **"It has always been hard to be a pionieer!" Jella Lepman, Eva-Maria Ledig und der Kampf um den Aufbau der Internationalen Jugendbibliothek.**  
[Jella Lepman, Eva-Maria Ledig, and the struggle of founding the International Youth Library]  
Christiane Raabe (Munich)

### *Part 2: Author and supporter of children's literature*

16.45 – 17.30            **Renommiert – fantasievoll, aber doch vergessen? Jella Lepmans Kinderliteratur vor und nach 1945**  
[Renowned – imaginative, but still forgotten? Jella Lepman's children's literature before and after 1945]  
Larissa Jagdschian (Paderborn)

## Break

17.45 – 18.30

„Wir hoffen, dass die deutschen Verleger sich die Übersetzungsrechte vieler dieser Bücher erwerben können“. Jella Lepman und die Internationalisierung der deutschen Kinder- und Jugendliteratur.

[“We hope that German publishers will be able to acquire the translation rights to many of these books“. Jella Lepman and the internationalisation of German children's and young adult literature.]

Emer O'Sullivan (Lüneburg)

## Dinner break

20.00

„Gebt und Bücher, gebt uns Flügel. Die Kinderbuchbrücke der Jella Lepman“

[Give us books, give us wings. Jella Lepman's Bridge of Children's Books]

A film by Andreas Steinhöfel

(with english subtitles)

Afterwards: Wine and conversation

## **Thursday, 5. September 2024**

- 9.30 – 10.15      **Jella Lepman und Hans Baumann: Nazis, Juden und Emigranten in der deutschen Kinderbuchszene, 1945-1960.**  
[Jella Lepman and Hans Baumann: Nazis, Jews and Emigrants in the German children's book scene, 1945-1960.]  
Alexander Korb (Nuremberg)

### *Part 3: International Networking*

- 10.15 – 11.00      **Children's literature beyond borders: Jella Lepman's collaboration with Italy**  
Cristina Gumirato (Milan)

### **Coffee break**

- 11.30 – 12.15      **Jella Lepman and America: an ambivalent relationship**  
David Jacobson (Seattle)
- 12.15 – 13.00      **Jella Lepman und die Rockefeller Foundation zwischen 1947 und 1952**  
[Jella Lepman and the Rockefeller Foundation between 1947 and 1952]  
Niklas Gödde (Münster)

### **Lunch break**

### *Part 4: Stance/Viewpoints and World Views*

- 14.15 – 15.00      **Jella Lepmans Kindheitsbild**  
[Jella Lepman's concept of childhood]  
Waldemar Fromm (Munich)
- 15.00 – 15.45      **Geboren als Tochter jüdischer Eltern. Jella Lepmans Verhältnis zum Judentum**  
[Born the daughter of Jewish parents: Jella Lepman's relationship to Judaism]  
Gabriele von Glasenapp (Frankfurt a.M.)

### **Coffee break**

- 16.15 – 17.00      **„Jella Lepman and her Library of Dreams“. Eine illustrierte Biographie für Kinder von Katherine Paterson (Text) und Sally Deng (Ill.).**  
[An illustrated biography for children by Katherine Paterson (text) and Sally Deng (illus.)]  
Book presentation with Katherine Paterson (online) and Claudia Lepman-Logan.  
Host/Interviewer: Claudia Söffner (International Youth Library Foundation)

The conference will be held in German and English. Simultaneous translation into English available for the German presentations.

With the kind support of the Bünemann Foundation, the Hans Dieter Beck Foundation, and the Alumni Network of the International Youth Library Foundation.

Please register via [anmeldung@ijb.de](mailto:anmeldung@ijb.de). Keyword: **Lepman conference**

## Speakers

**Anna Becchi**, Genoa/Italy is a translator from German, Dutch, and English, a literary agent, and a publicist. She has been working on a biography of Jella Lepman for several years.

**Irene Ferchl**, Stuttgart, is a freelance arts and culture journalist. From 1993 to 2019, she was publisher and editor-in-chief of the magazine „Literaturblatt für Baden-Württemberg“.

**Dr Kristina Fink**, Wuppertal, works as research assistant on the digital historical-critical edition of Arthur Schnitzler's works.

**Prof Dr Waldemar Fromm**, Munich, has been head of the Centre for Literature in Munich/Bavaria at the Institute for German Philology at Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich since 2010.

**Prof Dr Gabriele von Glasenapp**, Frankfurt a.M., was Professor of Literature and Literary Didactics at the University of Cologne until 2023.

**Niklas Gödde**, Münster, is a PhD scholar of the German National Academic Foundation and is doing his doctorate in literature at the Institute of German Studies at the University of Münster.

**Dr Cristina Gumirato**, Milan/Italy, is a research assistant at the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore Milan.

**Dr Larissa Jagdschian**, Paderborn, works as research assistant at the Institute of German and Comparative Literature at Paderborn University.

**David Jacobson**, Seattle/USA, American journalist, author, and translator from Japanese, is working on a biography of Jella Lepman.

**Prof Dr Alexander Korb**, Nuremberg, worked as a lecturer in Modern European History at the University of Leicester. Since June 2024 he has been the director of the Nuremberg Trials Memorium.

**Claudia Lepman-Logan**, Cambridge/USA, a former classroom teacher and educator, is an author and the granddaughter of Jella Lepman.

**Prof Dr Emer O'Sullivan**, Lüneburg, is Professor of English Literature at Leuphana University of Lüneburg.

**Katherine Paterson**, Vermont/USA, is an award-winning American children's book author. She has received both the Hans Christian Andersen Award and the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award for her work.

**Dr Christiane Raabe**, Munich, has been the director of the International Youth Library since 2007.

**Prof Dr Daniel Siemens**, Newcastle/UK, is Professor of European History at Newcastle University and a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society.

**Dr Olivia Varwig**, Wuppertal, works as research assistant on the digital historical-critical edition of Arthur Schnitzler.