History

The IAI was founded in 1930 with the donation of the 82,000-volume private collection of the Argentinean scholar Ernesto Quesada to the Prussian state on condition that it should be the germ cell for an institute designed to foster relations between Germany and Latin America. The Institute’s purpose was to produce research projects as well as support artists and researchers from Latin America in all matters concerning the cultural exchange. The growth of the Institute’s library was to be assured by acquisitions and exchange.

In 1962 the Institute was incorporated into the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation (Stiftung Preussischer Kulturbesitz, SPK). The Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation is one of the world’s largest cultural and scientific institutions with its former Prussian collections and archives. The Federal Government and the individual states of Germany share the legal and financial responsibility for the foundation. Today, the home of the IAI is near the Kulturforum in Berlin, at Potsdamer Strasse 37.

The Ibero-American Institute Mission and Activities

The Ibero-American Institute (IAI) is an interdisciplinary center for academic and cultural exchange between Germany and Latin America, the Caribbean, Spain and Portugal. It is home to the largest specialist library in Europe for the Ibero-American region. It is also a place of knowledge production, exchange and cultural translation. Combining an information center, a research center and a cultural center, the IAI is both a platform for cooperation and a catalyst for intercultural and transcultural dialogues.

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The Institute

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Mission and Activities

One of the missions of the Ibero-American Institute (IAI) is to enlarge its library and special collections and make them accessible. The scientific profile of the IAI is characterized by a wide range of activities, including research projects, publishing, the hosting of visiting scholars, research grants and fellowships, an interdisciplinary academic colloquium, advisory activities, collaboration in scientific committees and teaching activities in Germany and abroad. The IAI promotes the scientific and cultural exchange by organizing scientific conferences and public events and publishing books and journals. Thanks to its unique combination of different areas and its location, the IAI is widely recognized for its research and its intercultural dialogue, which emanates into politics, culture and society.

Library

The Ibero-American Institute holds the largest European library specialized on Latin America, the Caribbean, Spain, Portugal and Latino Studies. It collects and curates books, journals, electronic documents, maps, audio media, photographs, videos, DVDs, papers and diverse other materials. The IAI is integrated into the Program for Special Subject Collections supported by the German Research Foundation (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, DFG). The library systematically acquires material in all languages and from all over the world. Subject areas include the humanities, social sciences, including economics and law, as well as the geological, agricultural and environmental sciences. The library also collects government publications. There are 75 desks, 30 research workstations and various printing and reproduction facilities in the library’s reading rooms. All materials are made available to users at the Institute itself, through the online catalogue (www.iaicat.de) or through the national and international interlibrary loan system.

Scientific and Research Activities

The research staff members of the IAI have diverse academic backgrounds, including social anthropology, history, literature and cultural studies, linguistics and political sciences. A distinctive feature of the Institute’s profile is the combination of scientific, library-oriented and cultural activities. In the years 2010—2014, the research activities of the IAI concentrate upon the main focus “Cultural transfers and scientific exchange between Europe and Latin America”. The IAI awards grants to scholars to access the library holdings and special collections for their research and to collaborate with the Institute’s research staff. The Institute publishes a diverse range of books and scientific journals in several languages, including the series Bibliotheca Ibero-Americana, Estudios Indiana and Biblioteca Luso-Brasileira and the journals Iberoamericana and Indiana.

Events

The program of events of the IAI appeals both to specialist and general audiences interested in Latin America and the Iberian Peninsula. A large variety of events are organized, including exhibitions, readings, discussions, concerts, film series, lectures, and conferences. They focus attention on important and actual issues from diverse point of views. It is of utmost concern to the Institute to illuminate the plurality of the Ibero-American world for Germany and Europe in its program of events, in accord with its original mission to be a mediator between Ibero-America and Germany. The IAI aims to promote a differentiated point of view that transcends stereotypes, and also to create awareness for interactions between cultures.