

Almost 150 years of concentrated knowledge about electricity: VDE library gets new home at RWE

- **Contemporary testimony to the history of electrical engineering and the development of electricity**
- **A total of 40,000 magazines and books, many from the 19th century**
- **RWE adds complete collection to Essen company archive**

(Frankfurt a. M./Essen, March 4, 2025) Using the sun's rays, wind and waterfalls to produce fuel, such as hydrogen, with the help of electricity. As early as 1880, Werner von Siemens mused that imagining this "does not require too bold a flight of fantasy", creating what was probably one of the first visions of the principle of renewable energy, which can be read in the first issue of ETZ, the electrotechnical journal published by the VDE (now [etz elektrotechnik & automation](#)). The issue is one of the highlights of the VDE library, which fills 1,000 meters of rolling shelves and has now found a new home at the [RWE archive](#) in Essen.

A library constantly on the move

"It's the usual fate of every library: the main problem was always to provide enough space for the size of the collection. And this was often the responsibility of honorary VDE board members," recalls Peter Döring, member of the [VDE History of Electrical Engineering Committee](#) (German). The collection has already been through many stages: first at [VDE Verlag](#) (Publishing House) in Berlin, then Stuttgart, Düsseldorf and Dortmund in the postwar era. The changes in the German energy industry have also influenced the fate of the library. Until recently, the collection was stored at the Zeitreise Strom electricity museum in the [Recklinghausen substation](#) on the premises of [Westenergie](#) (German), a successor company to VEW. VEW itself has been absorbed by RWE.

Other outstanding publications in the collection are specialist books and textbooks on electricity, which were in vogue at the end of the 19th century. Electricity was spreading rapidly and people were keenly interested in the new technology and its possibilities. Or advertising material extolling the virtues of electricity over gas and petroleum. There was also a complete series of statistical books on electricity supply. Each power station was listed in them, how many customers it had or even the number of light bulbs.

Historically valuable and worth preserving

Some time ago, experts from Münster University Library classified the library as historically valuable, as Döring explains: "They found that many publications are not available at all, only once or very rarely in Germany. The VDE Library is unique in this compilation and specialization."

"Individual volumes would certainly be of interest to a technology museum, but not the entire library. It is therefore a stroke of luck for the VDE that RWE is taking the collection into its spacious and modern archive. This will ensure the preservation of the collection through professional storage in air-conditioned rooms and care for the future," says Michael Schanz, who is among other things responsible for the history department at VDE. It was also agreed in the contract that RWE would make the acquired book and journal holdings accessible to a specialist audience interested in the history of technology.

About the VDE

VDE, one of the largest technology organizations in Europe, has been regarded as a synonym for innovation and technological progress for more than 130 years. VDE is the only organization in the world that combines science, standardization, testing, certification, and application consulting under one umbrella. The VDE mark has been synonymous with the highest safety standards and consumer protection for more than 100 years.

Our passion is the advancement of technology, the next generation of engineers and technologists, and lifelong learning and career development "on the job". Within the VDE network more than 2,000 employees at over 60 locations worldwide, more than 100,000 honorary experts, and around 1,500 companies are dedicated to ensuring a future worth living: networked, digital, electrical. Shaping the e-dialistic future.

The VDE (VDE Association for Electrical, Electronic & Information Technologies) is based in Frankfurt am Main. More information at www.vde.com

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