

Schering Rosenhane's Book Collection at the Library of the Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities

Henning Hansen

Schering Rosenhane

Charles de Geer the Politician (1747–1805) and the civil servant, historian, and collector Schering Rosenhane the Younger (1754–1812) were both members of the same generation of enlightened noblemen and shared a passion for learning, diplomacy, and books. Coming from similar backgrounds in terms of title and tradition, they were involved in the royal learned societies and the politics of the day at the highest level. Both owned significant personal libraries, which have been preserved to this day. However, Rosenhane favoured the humanities, while De Geer's collections contained much natural history, because of the interests of his father Charles de Geer the Entomologist (1720–1778). Unlike De Geer, whose library remained in private hands until 1986, Rosenhane never fathered any children, so his books ended up in institutional libraries.

Rosenhane's undispersed library, which included his collection of manuscripts and portfolios of maps, engravings, and drawings, consisted of at least 5,000 volumes.¹ A patron of the arts, he eventually

¹ Bachman (2005), p. 160.

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became an enthusiastic and loyal member of both the Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities and the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences. Rosenhane devoted much of his life to studying and promoting Swedish history. He was a systematic collector who appreciated disseminating the knowledge he had amassed. In a letter to the publicist Carl Christoffer Gjörwell (1731–1811), he noted that “assembling collections without communicating them to others is like hiding one’s light under a bushel”.² Although never becoming quite the leading historian he had perhaps aspired to be, Rosenhane is still considered one of the most important scholars of the historical sciences during the Gustavian period.

In his capacity as *kansliråd* (chancellery counsellor) and eventually *statssekreterare* (state secretary) in *Kunglig Majestäts kansli* (the predecessor of *Regeringskansliet* or Swedish Government Offices), Rosenhane worked alongside prominent members of the cultural sphere. Among his closest colleagues were the archivist Gustaf Ribbing (1719–1811), author Gustaf Fredrik Gyllenborg (1731–1808), *riksantikvarie* (National Antiquarian) Gudmund Jöran Adlerbeth (1751–1818), musician and superintendent Carl Fredrik Fredenheim (1748–1803), and Royal Librarian Anders Wilde (1725–1795). In addition, Rosenhane corresponded with many of the leading scholars of the time and benefited from this network in both a professional and personal capacity.

Rosenhane divided his time between Stockholm and the family estate Torp, in Södermanland County. He never married nor had any children. When he died in 1812, he was the last remaining male member of the Rosenhane noble family, and he was buried in the family grave at the parish church in Husby-Oppunda. His only remaining relative was his sister, Sophia Rosenhane (1757–1837), who was also childless. On 15 September 1822, Sophia Rosenhane and her husband Johan Jakob Frans Jennings (1762–1828) signed a donor’s letter bequeathing Rosenhane’s library to three institutions that

² Odelberg (1958), p. 13. [My translation]

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had all played an important role in Rosenhane's life: the gymnasium in Strängnäs, Uppsala University, and the Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities.³

Rosenhane's Book Collection

A series of articles published in *Stockholms Tidning* in 1825, written after a visit to the Rosenhane family estate in the summer of 1820, offer the following description of the library:

The upper floor consists of two library rooms and two guestrooms. [...] The larger library room is covered with bookcases in oak from floor to ceiling, filled with precious works and books, arranged according to subject. [...] On a table in the middle of room lie the catalogues for the library and the collections [...] The smaller library room houses material relating to Sweden and Swedish history. There is also a great collection of biographies and eulogies of more or less well-known men and scholars, nobility, and commoners, as well as noble and common women.⁴

The donation to the Academy included 1,820 volumes, consisting chiefly of books on Swedish and Nordic history and topography. Out of these, 48 volumes are currently deposited in the National Library of Sweden (since 1880). The rest of Rosenhane's collection was offered to Uppsala University. Books already held by Uppsala University were to be given to the gymnasium in Strängnäs. According to Marie-Louise Bachman, some 1,400 volumes were donated to Uppsala University and around 700 volumes to Strängnäs Gymnasium.⁵

The donation to the Academy was initially underappreciated by the Academy's secretary, Birger Rutström (1758–1826). Rutström stated that there was not enough space to accommodate the collection. His successor, Johan Gustaf Liljegren (1791–1837), recognised

³ For a fuller biography of Rosenhane, see Bergstedt (1813), Burius (2000), and Bachman (2005).

⁴ Quoted from Carlander (1904), pp. 42–43. [My translation]

⁵ Bachman (2005), p. 160. Samuelsson states 816 volumes. Samuelsson (2019), p. 118.

the donation's value and transferred the book collection from Torp to Stockholm. In accordance with the instructions of the donors, the book collection should "for all eternity remain undispersed, accessible and in proper order, under the name of the Rosenhane Library".⁶ With the Rosenhane collection in place, the Academy's library transformed from a minor book collection into a proper library.

Over the years, the Academy's collection has been housed in various locations, including one of the wings of Stockholms slott (The Royal Palace), before being transferred to the National Museum in 1864, reportedly after being beaten against the windowsills to rid the volumes of dust. In the outline of the library room at the National Museum from the late nineteenth century, the Rosenhane collection occupies sections A through H, constituting the core of the Academy's collection (Fig. 1). The books were kept in the original grand bookcases. At some point during the twentieth century, the books and the bookcases were separated, and the majestic bookcases were chopped into firewood in the 1960s. Only the decorative capital panels bearing the Rosenhane family crest were preserved. Today, the Rosenhane collection is still undispersed and in its original order, occupying an entire wall in the secure rare book room of the library, which is below ground level at Storgatan 43 in Stockholm.

Rosenhane's donation to the Academy consisted of three parts: the great book collection (1,520 volumes); 300 *Sammelbände*, which Rosenhane called his *Collectanea Historica* (carefully structured, this collection is impressive both in its size and coverage and individual *Sammelbände* can even be considered small libraries in their own right as they include dozens of dissertations, speeches, pamphlets, and Royal decrees, in some cases over one hundred in a single volume); and, the map, print, and drawing collections, which focus on topography, feasts and battle scenes. This collection has been

⁶ Bachman (2003), p. 58.

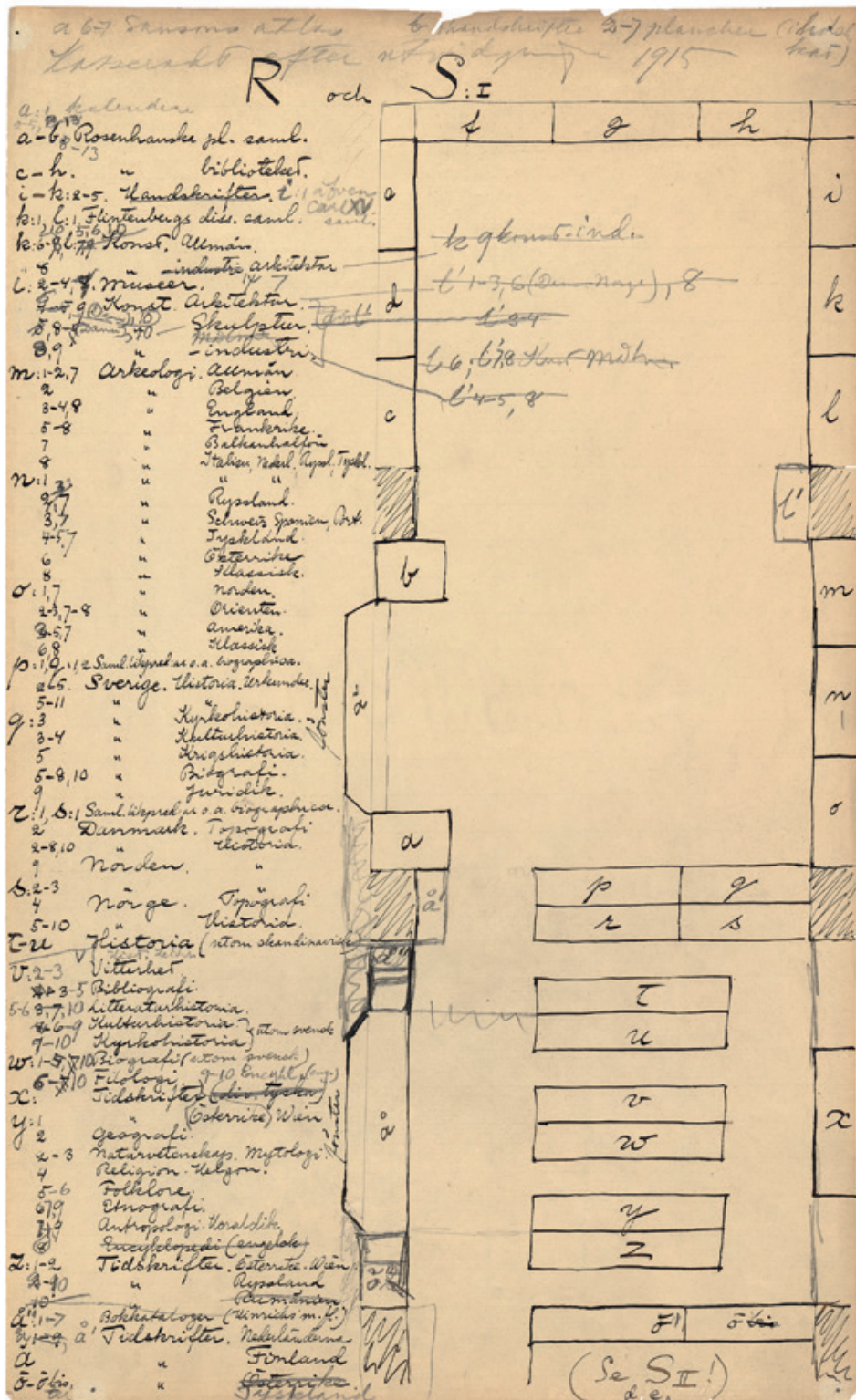


Figure 1. Outline of part of the Library of the Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities, in the National Museum. Undated, c. 1900. [SE/ATA/ARK2_1-4/D 1 B/1, Antiquarian Topographic Archive, The Archive of the Swedish National Heritage Board, Stockholm].

described in some detail by Wilhelm Odelberg and is currently subject to a digitization project.⁷

Provenance

Most books in Rosenhane's library contain Rosenhane's engraved bookplate (Fig. 2). Unsurprisingly, many volumes also feature marks of provenance from previous owners such as signatures, annotations, bookplates, stamps, and armorial bindings. Often it is possible to trace the provenance of books included in the collection back hundreds of years, sometimes to its very first owner. The oldest titles in Rosenhane's library are from the sixteenth century, but most date from the latter part of the seventeenth century or later. Although there were several dedicated book collectors in the Rosenhane family, some even with literary ambitions, others seem to have been as keen on the task of scattering the collections. Rosenhane's own father, for example, dispersed most of the library at Tistad, another Rosenhane estate, before demolishing the old mansion and building a new one in its place. A great deal of the family's book collection is also believed to have been lost in a fire in 1699.⁸

Some books were passed down the generations in the Rosenhane family. For instance, a handful of books are marked with the discrete initials S. R. on the title page. These books belonged to Schering Rosenhane the Elder (1609–1663), one of the most well-respected Swedish diplomats and statesmen of the seventeenth century and an avid book collector. When he died, his large library was divided between his ten children. The best part of the collection ended up with his son Johan Rosenhane (1642–1710), who was something of a bibliophile. His signature is found in many books from Rosenhane's library, most of them arguably originating from his father's library.

At least one of the books in Rosenhane's library has been inscribed by Beata Rosenhane (1638–1674), another of Schering Rosenhane

⁷ Odelberg (1958).

⁸ Walde (1920), pp. 157, 161–162.



Figure 2. Schering Rosenhane's engraved bookplate featuring the Rosenhane family crest, in a copy of his own work *Svea-rikes konunga-längd*, Stockholm, 1789. Rosenhane's bookplate appears in two different sizes, and on both blue and white paper. The number on the library label below refers to Schröder's catalogue.

the Elder's children. Beata Rosenhane received an education at the same level as her brothers and accompanied her father on some of his trips to the continent. Considered one of the most learned Swedish women of the seventeenth century, she has been the subject of scholarly interest.⁹ The book that has belonged to Beata Rosenhane is Georges de Scudéry's *Alaric, ou Rome vaincue* (Paris, 1654), which is bound in beautiful red morocco leather. The book, which in all likelihood was intended as a gift for Charles X Gustav of Sweden (r. 1654–1660), has been inscribed by the author. Subject-wise, most of the books from Rosenhane's ancestors fit into the collection rather nicely, suggesting that Rosenhane appreciated them more for their contents than as family heirlooms. With that said, there are, however, exceptions. A copy of the Bible in Swedish, for example, which belonged to the diplomat and commander Bengt Oxenstierna (1623–1702), Rosenhane's great-grandfather, contains records of important family events, presumably written in Oxenstierna's own hand.

Some of the books in Rosenhane's library were taken as war booty during the Swedish war campaigns on the continent. It is well-known that Schering Rosenhane the Elder's library contained a great deal of books from the royal libraries in Warsaw as well as from several notable Jesuit libraries.¹⁰ Most of his books that have not been lost have ended up in other public libraries in Sweden and Denmark, sometimes without traces of their Rosenhane provenance. A handful of volumes of royal Polish provenance remain unscathed in the Rosenhane library to this day. Danish books also appear in Rosenhane's library; some of these presumably also seized as war booty in Denmark. For example, Hans Svaning's *Refutatio calumniarum* (1560) allegedly comes from an otherwise undocumented Jesuit College in Copenhagen.¹¹ At least three books in the library have belonged to members of the Swedish royal family. One of them, Samuel von Pufendorf's *De rebus a Carolo Gustavo* (1696), in a rather

⁹ Hansson (1993); Meyer (1889).

¹⁰ Walde (1920), pp. 145–176.

¹¹ Walde (1917), pp. 331–332.

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splendid half calf binding with three gilt crowns as spine decoration, presumably comes from the library of Hedvig Eleonora of Holstein-Gottorp, Queen of Sweden (1636–1715).

The book collection also contains remnants of several notable private libraries. A few volumes come from the library of one of Rosenhane's neighbours, Carl Gustaf Warmholtz (1713–1785), who was the owner of a famous book collection and the author of the monumental bibliographical work *Bibliotheca historica Sueo-Gothica* (1782–1817). Rosenhane and Warmholtz shared a passion for Swedish history, and they both systematically collected and amassed both books and knowledge.

Another personal library represented in the collection in several volumes is that of Johan Biörnstierna (1729–1797), a person whose signature and wax seal is found on many flyleaves and title pages and who was both Rosenhane's childhood private tutor (*informator*) and King Gustav III's personal librarian. Biörnstierna maintained close ties with the Rosenhane family throughout his life. Books written or published by Gjørwell, another of Rosenhane's friends, often contain dedications from Gjørwell to Rosenhane. A few volumes in the library also carry the bookplate of Upfostrings-sällskapet ('The Educative Society'), which was the Enlightenment brainchild of Gjørwell and some of his close acquaintances, with Rosenhane as a supporter and contributor. The society acquired the library of Warmholtz, but in 1794 their collections had to be sold at auction, and substantial parts of the collection ended up with Gjørwell's son-in-law, Johan Niklas Lindahl (1762–1813), Uppsala University Library, or Rosenhane. Other books in the collection come from the libraries of Olof Rudbeck the Elder (1630–1702),¹² Carl Gustaf Tessin (1695–1770), Johan Gustaf Psilanderhielm (1723–1782), and Nils Nilsson Stiernflycht (1738–1778), only to mention a few.

¹² See the article by Erik Hamberg in this volume.

Reading and Readers

Rosenhane compiled the library catalogues mentioned in the 1825 article himself, and today they are kept at Uppsala University Library. Seemingly, it was important for Rosenhane to make his collection both useful and accessible. Rosenhane made a point of equipping his *Sammelbände* with detailed inventory lists, which can usually be found on the flyleaves. His thematic division of his books facilitated quick navigation of the collection, and it is evident that the order and documentation of the collection were made with reading and readers in mind. Rosenhane's acquaintances were undoubtedly allowed to roam his library. However, Rosenhane was its primary user, and many of the books are filled with his annotations. Rosenhane kept the best part of the collection in his Stockholm apartment rather than at the family estate, a choice that allowed him to have immediate access to his most prized books.

Making the collection available to users was also a priority of Rosenhane's sister and brother-in-law. Ahead of the donation, the librarian Johan Henrik Schröder (1791–1857) was assigned the task of compiling a separate catalogue of the part of Rosenhane's library that would go to the Academy. Each volume was assigned a specific number corresponding to the catalogue, and this number was written on a slip of paper that was placed in the book. Schröder's slips remain in place to this day. Following the instructions from the donors, the Academy also kept a loan catalogue, which recorded all loans from Rosenhane's library. In accordance with the wishes of the donors, Rosenhane's books could be checked out by library patrons residing in Stockholm, but items from the illustrations and drawings collection could only be viewed *in situ*.

The loan catalogue records the loans of the Rosenhane books between 1828 and 1862. It is striking that the number of loans is quite limited. Most borrowers are well-known members of the cultural sphere. Among the most frequently recurring borrowers were the historian Anders Magnus Strinnholm (1786–1862), politician Johan August Posse (1815–1865), cultural historian Nils Månsson

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Mandelgren (1813–1899), medieval historian Carl Gustaf Styffe (1817–1908), diplomat and scholar Gunnar Olof Hyltén-Cavallius (1818–1889), antiquarian Richard Dybeck (1811–1877), Norwegian official Johan Fredrik Monrad (1799–1877), the Finnish political journalist and historian Adolf Ivar Awridsson (1791–1858), vicar to the Royal Court Anders Lagergren (1802–1867), and renowned zoologist and archaeologist Sven Nilsson (1787–1883).

The Legacy of Rosenhane

Rosenhane's library was bequeathed to the Academy at a decisive moment. The Gustavian era of royal patronage was long gone, and economic and institutional stability were important for the Academy to prosper. Furthermore, the donation was consistent with how Rosenhane himself had supported the Academy over the years. In the hands of the Academy, the Rosenhane library constituted crucial research infrastructure. The Rosenhane donation was a well-needed injection to the Academy's library, which ultimately ensured its long-term survival. As the subjects of the Rosenhane donation were aligned with the subjects of the Academy and the collection was large but not too large to cause storage problems, the library of the Academy avoided the same fate as the Swedish Academy Library, which was dispersed during the late nineteenth century.

Today, the Rosenhane collection can still be consulted by the library's patrons, although they are no longer allowed to take the books home. Although the collection only represents a minor part of Rosenhane's original library, it remains a collected entity, kept in the same order as it was during Rosenhane's time and still with the format – folio, quarto, octavo, and so forth – as the primary guiding principle. Other libraries in Sweden have received similar donations over the years, but these book collections have mostly been scattered, making it difficult or even impossible to reconstruct the undispersed collections, even digitally.

Although containing many individual books that deserve to be the subject of studies in their own right, it is perhaps the collection in

itself that today constitutes the true attraction. To be able to use and browse the collection in the same way as its original owner once did may further our understanding of not only how a Gustavian scholar would arrange and use his library but also of how knowledge and books were amassed and used in Sweden in Gustavian times.

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