Fritz Loewe, meteorologist
University of Melbourne Archives

Fritz Loewe filling a weather balloon
Fritz Loewe Collection, 1988.0160.00115
University of Melbourne Archives
German-born meteorologist and polar explorer Fritz Loewe (1895–1974) studied law and languages in Berlin and Grenoble, before serving in World War I as a wireless operator. He gained his PhD in geography and physics in 1926 and joined Alfred Wegener’s ill-fated expedition to Greenland in 1929–30.

As a Jew, he was persecuted in Nazi Germany, first fleeing to England in 1934 before emigrating to Australia in 1937 with the support of Raymond Priestley, vice-chancellor of the University of Melbourne, whom he had met at the Scott Polar Institute in Cambridge. Loewe established Australia’s first department of meteorology, at the University of Melbourne.

During World War II, as a ‘refugee alien’ he trained Australian Air Force navigators, becoming an Australian citizen in 1944. Although he concentrated on teaching, Loewe was involved in several research expeditions to Antarctica, including the aborted 1947 expedition on HMAS Wyatt Earp and the 1950–51 expedition on the Commandant Charcot. In 1958 he worked with UNESCO to establish meteorological training in Karachi.

University of Melbourne Archives holds an extensive collection of material related to Fritz Loewe: photographs of his expeditions, a sleeping bag used in Greenland, technical data, research notes, professional and personal correspondence (some in German), newspaper clippings and lantern slides.

Teaching ideas
The University of Melbourne’s curriculum is rich and varied, and changes from year to year. For more teaching ideas, contact a collection manager.

Migrant Nation: Culture and Identity
Use the professional and personal correspondence of Fritz Loewe as an example of an educated individual’s experience fleeing Nazi Germany and subsequent emigration to Australia.

Science: A Study of Life and Environment
Explore the notebooks of Fritz Loewe, as well as newspaper clippings related to his expeditions, to bring to life early studies of Antarctica, meteorology and Earth sciences more broadly.

German in a Global World
Use the Fritz Loewe Collection – photographs and written material (in German and English) – to present a case study of the 20th-century emigration of a German citizen to Britain and then to Australia. Loewe was a truly global citizen, and the records of his Antarctic expeditions are also of interest.

Conservation of Photographs
Use the photographs, slides, lantern slides and glass negatives in the Fritz Loewe Collection to consider the condition, treatment and storage of a diverse early 20th-century collection.

Memory and Memoirs of 20th-Century Europe
Consider the unpublished personal correspondence and photographs of Fritz Loewe as a dynamic, tangible account of the experience of Nazi persecution of a highly educated and successful man of science.


Intersecting objects
University of Melbourne, Department of Geology Collection, 1980.0030
University of Melbourne Archives
This collection includes a set of lantern slides used by the geologist, polar explorer and vice-chancellor Sir Raymond Priestley (1886–1974) in his Australian lectures on polar exploration. The slides have been digitised and are available online.

Meteorology departmental records 1937–77
University of Melbourne, Department of Meteorology Collection, 1998.0037
University of Melbourne Archives

Diaries of Sir Raymond Priestley
Raymond Priestley Collection, 1973.0079
University of Melbourne Archives

For further information, visit the website of University of Melbourne Archives.

References

Fritz Loewe, Sixty years with ice, University of Melbourne Meteorology Department, 1976.


Else Wegener (ed.) with Fritz Loewe, Greenland journey: The story of Wegener’s German expedition to Greenland in 1930–31 as told by members of the expedition and the leader’s diary (translated by Winifred M. Deans), London: Blackie & Son Ltd, 1939.