Agricola is likely to have possessed a rich library. This would have been normal with his learned friends in Italy, but there are stronger grounds for believing this was the case. For instance, it is highly unlikely that he wrote his magnum opus, *De inventione dialectica*, without a large library at hand, though in Ferrara he could undoubtedly have used the books of others. Moreover, in all likelihood the memory of a fifteenth-century humanist was better developed than that of a twentieth-century academic or student. However, his own remarks, as well as those of contemporary and more recent biographers, suggest that Agricola indeed owned many books.

Shortly after 20 October 1483, before leaving for Heidelberg, Agricola writes to his dear friend Alexander Hegius: ‘Brother Henry ... was sent to me and I gave him my books to bring to Heidelberg’.1 This suggests that Agricola had more books than he could himself take to his new home. This impression is confirmed by what others say about his library. But anyone who tries to establish the size of his library and the titles of its books will be disappointed: apart from a small number of titles Agricola’s books cannot be traced.

Nauwelaerts, the most recent writer of a complete biography of Agricola, is very cautious and says that ‘some dozens of manuscripts and books will probably add up to the total’.2 This does not seem to be an unreasonable conjecture, but he adduces no arguments. Van der Velden, in his dissertation on Agricola, makes no guesses of this kind.3

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1 ‘Fuit ad me Henricus frater missus a domino Bartomogensi, dedi illi libros meos portandos Heidelbergam.’ *Ep*. 36.


3 Van der Velden, *Rodolphus Agricola*. 
In this paper the various written sources will be examined to find out what can be discovered of Agricola's library and the results will be checked against what is known about books which are still extant today. I will not treat his own writings nor their transmission, but only his library. In what follows I shall be concerned only with Agricola's letters, and with the reports by his contemporaries or near-contemporaries.

The Vitae of Agricola provide little explicit information. Johann von Pleneningen's biography is the first which is important for our subject (written before 1500; Johann died in 1506). From their student days in Pavia and Ferrara he had been a constant friend of Agricola. We read in his Vita that Agricola spent the money which he earned by playing the organ at the court of Ercole d'Este, duke of Ferrara, on libros grecos, 'Greek books'. A little later in the same Vita follows the information that Johann von Dalberg, bishop of Worms, who played an important rôle in the move to Heidelberg, provided him there with 'Hebrew books'. The text does not say how many books, nor on what subject. The relationship between Agricola and Von Dalberg remained very friendly until Agricola's death: from another source we know that he gave a manuscript of Cicero to Von Dalberg on his death-bed, pro ultimo valedono, as a last farewell gift.

Unfortunately we do not find remarks on Agricola's library in the Vita of Goswinus van Halen (c. 1520-1525). About a decade later, in 1536, another Vita was written by Gerardus Geldenhouwer of Nijmegen. He certainly never knew Agricola, and the question is where he got his information from. But his Vita does contain some useful material. We read:

because he was always moving about, Agricola left most of his books in the care of good friends, but ... he always carried a small select library with him. This consisted – apart from one or two selected texts of Plato, Cicero, and

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4 For the vitae see Weiss, 'The six lives of Rudolph Agricola'. On Agricola's biography see Akkerman, 'Rudolph Agricola, een humanistenleven', and his contribution to this volume.


6 'Preceptorem hebrae linguae admodum doctum homini conduxit, librorumque itidem hebreorum copiam maxima et cura et impensa corrasit.' Pfeifer, 'Rudolf Agricola', 103-104.

7 Two letters of Viglius to Celtis: See Morneweg, Johann von Dalberg, 342-343; cf. Van der Velden, Rodolphus Agricola, 253 and note 4.