

Old and new libraries in Germany

An invitation to the IFLA 2003 in Berlin

(Translation from German into English by Bernhard Plassmann, Glasgow)

Ladies and Gentlemen,

dear colleagues,

At this early hour I would like to welcome you to a preview to next year's congress in Berlin, IFLA 2003. Thank you for giving some attention already to next year's congress in Germany, although this year's gathering in Britain has barely started.

I will show you 48 slides all of which, apart from three of them, I commissioned from Christoph Seelbach a photographer from Cologne.

I start with the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preussischer Kulturbesitz, a library which I am sure will be known to most of you by name, a library very much at the heart of the city where the next IFLA conference will take place.



Already the rather intricate name of this library indicates some of the vicissitudes it underwent in its long history. It was founded in 1661 by the Elector-Prince of Brandenburg, and as Prussia became one of Europe's five Great Powers, also its central library became an internationally leading institution.



The pictures you are seeing are from the time of the library's prime in the early 20th Century when the Prussian state gave its Royal Library on the famous 'Unter den Linden' boulevard. By the time of the II World War the library already held 3 million books. The war damages were never quite restored during the time of Communist government in East Germany but the building is now nearly fully restored. The new British General Director of the library, our dear colleague Graham Jefcoat, has been leading these efforts for the past half year – for me this is a wonderful example of the new quality of the Academic World in Europe.

This picture, like the first one, shows the outside of the building as it faces 'Unter den Linden', and the next picture allows you to have an impression of the both spacious and relaxed first courtyard.



This is a picture of House 2 of the Staatsbibliothek, a more prosaic modern-day name for this building.



It shows a building constructed during the 70ies, in West Berlin very close to the Wall. It was designed to give a home to those books of the Staatsbibliothek which had been moved from Berlin during the war to avoid the bombing, and which had – purely by chance – ended up in one of the Western Zones of occupation at the end of the war. This was about half of the total, the other half ended up in the Soviet Zone and were re-housed in the old main building ‘Unter den Linden’. This meant that there were two fragmented libraries, only a mile apart from each other as the crow flies, but divided by the Wall.



The building was designed by the great architect Hans Sharoun. His ‘reading balconies’ are both famous and much liked by the users of the building.



Since the Unification of Germany both libraries – House 1 and House 2 – are again united to form one Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preussischer Kulturbesitz. We call it ‘one library in two houses’.

Not only the State of Prussia, but also its Capital City, Berlin, had its own large academic library, the Berliner Stadtbibliothek. As most of the important cultural institutions of Berlin it was situated in the city centre, the part of Berlin which the Soviets kept for themselves and which later became known as East Berlin.



The Berliner Stadtbibliothek is now united with the Amerika Gedenk Bibliothek, a library founded after the war as a classic public library in the American sense. Together they form the Stiftung Zentral- und Landesbibliothek of the City-State of Berlin. The Stadtbibliothek in the Eastern part of Berlin received this remarkable bronze door during the times of Communist government, which shows a huge number of ‘A’s in many different varieties.

With the following two pictures I would like to briefly make you aware of two historical curiosities.



This picture shows one of the libraries of the Prussian King Frederic the Second, also known as Frederic the Great or 'the Old Fritz'. He was a very highly educated man and thanks to God his library survived the war. Part of his library is in Potsdam, the city of his residence, and another part is in Schloss Charlottenburg in Berlin. During a tourist visit of this castle you can marvel at the beauty of the books and their refined bookcases.

A completely different, and slightly bizarre heritage of another Prussian King can be seen on the following picture.



It is the so-called Gothic Library which the nephew and successor of Frederic the Second, Frederic William the Second had built for himself on the shore of one of the lakes in the middle of Potsdam (very close to Berlin).

A last picture from Berlin.



The so-called Siemensvilla was built before the First World War and it houses the German Music Archive, the national collection of all published sound sources produced in Germany. The German Music Archive is part of the German National Library, and just as the Deutsche Bücherei in Leipzig, and the Deutsche Bibliothek in Frankfurt have the task to collect all books, this institution collects all published recorded music.

This leads me on to the Deutsche Bücherei in Leipzig.



This is a picture of the main facade of the large building erected between 1913 to 1916 (it is difficult to photograph the front due to the many trees nearby). The Deutsche Bücherei has been collecting all German language books (1 copy each) since 1913. On top of this, the library has also created a series of important special collections over the decades. The Bücherei has great merits in the processes of deacidification of old books. The following picture shows the library's plant for these tasks, initially installed in the basement.



Now this department has been outsourced and continues its work as a separate company in Leipzig. The Deutsche Bibliothek in Frankfurt am Main was founded after the Second World War in the

American Zone of Occupation, and already before German unification in 1990 the library had become one of the biggest national libraries in the world. In 1998 it was rehoused in a new building which – it is promised – will provide enough space for German language books and all books about Germany until 2025. Here is a view in the friendly, open and rather humble entrance hall.



Have a look in the reading rooms.



Let me remind you that one copy of all German language books is collected in both Leipzig and Frankfurt. With ninety thousand new titles per year, German language book production is currently the third largest in the world, following Chinese and English – this creates considerable problems for the national collection. Some ways of addressing these problems that were invented in the old building of the national library in Frankfurt, can be seen in the following picture.



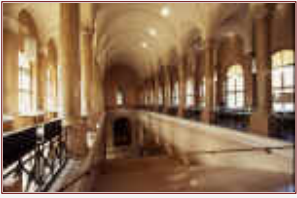
Whilst all German language book production is being collected in Leipzig and Frankfurt am Main, there are two further libraries in Germany that have the task of collecting all the academic literature of Germany and important world-wide academic publications: the Staatsbibliothek in Berlin which we have already talked about, and the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek in Munich.



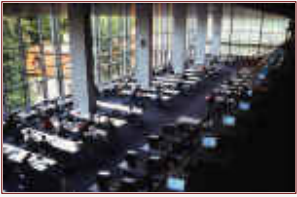
The library's impressive facade was built following ideas of the Italian Renaissance, along the Ludwig Strasse in the heart of Munich. It was built in the eighteen thirties and forties, and whilst it was nearly completely destroyed in the Second World War, it has been fully restored in the nineteen sixties.



Greek poets and philosophers look over the entrance.



The steps leading up to the visitors' rooms are truly royal, not least because it was due to King Ludwig the First's personal involvement thanks to whom Munich was blessed with many impressive buildings.



However, today users have to use the modern reading rooms which during reconstruction were relocated at the back of the building.

Those of you who might want to visit the Bavarian State Library in Munich might also want to visit some of the other many libraries in Munich, such as the the Munich City Library am Gasteig, one of the most interesting modern public libraries in Germany, or also the library of the German Museum, one of the most important libraries in Germany as regards the history of science and technology. I only have time to refer to one other library in Munich, the International Youth Library, an interesting mix of the types of public library and academic library.



It is housed in the beautiful historic Schloss Blumenburg (an artistic installation in the foreground), and it offers a very beautifully kept surrounding for use as a public and an academic library.



Just a quick look at two further libraries: the Herzogin Anna Amalia Bibliothek in Weimar and the Herzog August Bibliothek in Wolfenbuettel. They are also of national importance – although in a completely different sense than the great institutions of Berlin, Leipzig, Frankfurt and Munich.



During the GDR years the Duchess Anna Amalia library in Weimar was simply called Central library of the German Classic Era – which was not entirely appropriate. However, we cannot leave this library out of our brief overview as our illustrious national poet Johann Wolfgang Goethe was once its director and frequent user.



The library of Duke August in Wolfenbuettel must not be left out of my considerations, especially here at our international congress of librarians. This library embodies the international and cosmopolitan spirit like few others, and in a tradition that reaches back as far as the 17th century.

Both these libraries have the name of local princes who lived in the 17th or 18th century and who left lasting legacies. These libraries were the foundations of princes, as so many others. This means that, although modern-day Germany is made up of only 16 federal states, there are more than 40 central regional libraries – Landesbibliotheken. Most of these were also historic foundations of princes – I will later come to speak of some more of these.

We have had a brief impression of the great libraries of national importance. These are also of international importance in as much as each library of a certain size will have, or ought to have. The libraries mentioned thus far – in Berlin, Leipzig, Frankfurt am Main, and München, and equally those in Potsdam, Weimar and Wolfenbuettel – are important examples of the great academic traditions of Central Europe. This is why I have talked about them first and foremost.

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Now a quick look at a few libraries which some of the colleagues traveling to Germany for the IFLA congress of 2003 may also find of interest to visit. These libraries will have to function as examples for great many more that exist in Germany of these types.

First of all, I would like to mention three University libraries which serve as examples for the more than 75 University libraries in Germany: Tübingen, Leipzig and Frankfurt at the Oder.

Tübingen is an example of an old university (it was founded in 1477) which was given a new library building in the time of the 19th century German Empire. The building was not damaged during the last war.



It is a typical pre World War One building, still in a neo-baroque style, but already looking for more modern and simpler forms.



The reading room already show some of the typical elements of Art Nouveau – also referred to as "Jugendstil" in Germany – a style which especially here in Glasgow in its Scottish version is also very well known.



After the Second World War a new reading room was attached to the old building, much in the style of the reading room of the Free University in Berlin. These were very much modeled on American examples, as West Germany turned its eyes to America after the war.

Also the University of Leipzig received a new building at the end of the long period of peace before the First World War. Even more than the building in Tübingen it is in the neobaroque style. In April 1945, just before the end of the war, it was badly damaged and then not rebuilt during the GDR years.



After unification in 1990 the reconstruction started quickly.



The sign speaks of the rebuilding of the Albertine library, a name taken from the then Saxonian King Albert.

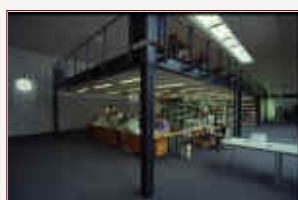


The Reconstruction carefully used all the remaining old building material, and plans, but then put a modern state of the art library inside.

And, finally, a third example of a University library: Frankfurt at the Oder.



The building we see here used to be a Prussian administrative building. It survived the intense fighting of the war and has been used as the seat of Frankfurt University since its re-foundation in 1992. The University was originally founded in 1502, but had been closed in 1810 to favor the newly founded University of Berlin; only after German unification in 1990 has this University been re-opened. The library is housed in the former attic of the building – the Prussian state used to build such solid buildings that the upper levels of this building can support the heavy weight of all the books.



Inside the modern interior with mezzanine levels for readers.

The University libraries of Leipzig and Frankfurt at the Oder are good examples for the quick modernization of the library system of the former GDR.



In the first years after unification a lot of improvisation was necessary – here is the library of Potsdam Polytechnic where most of the books had to be housed in a gym for a while.

Just a few more examples for buildings which were originally designed for a different use and which now house libraries:



The Landesbibliothek Oldenburg, which has been housed in a former barracks for the past fifteen years.



Have a look at the inside – the former military use has left no traces.



The City library of Loerrach is housed in a former supermarket, which can easily be recognized by the large windows. These shop windows certainly have an inviting effect for potential users of the library.



The library of the European Translation Centre in Straelen at the Lower Rhine is housed in a simple town house.



However, the house has been extended at the back, and today it provides a working and living space for more than thirty literary translators at a time. The translators can live and work there for many weeks at a time and they can use then more than 100.000 dictionaries and encyclopedias.

And, finally, a few examples for interesting new library buildings.



The library of the Archdiocese and the Cathedral of Cologne is a low building on a very humane scale, fronted by these low steps that invite passing people to drop in. In the foreground you can see the chapel of the a conference centre attached to the library.



This is the Regional library of Baden in Karlsruhe, one of the most talked-about new library buildings of the past ten years, the architect was Matthias Josef Unger.

city library of Muenster
(71625 bytes)

Also the new city library of Muenster in Westphalia is an interesting modern architectural gem which adds a contemporary light to the old city of Muenster.



The city library of Muenster from the inside.



This is the library of the new University of Augsburg. The university was founded in the nineteen seventies, whilst the library was built in the nineteen nineties.



And, to conclude two particularly spectacular new buildings: the library of the polytechnic of Eberswalde and the City and Regional Library of Dortmund.

The library in Eberswalde – not too far from Berlin – is a fantastic building by the Swiss Architects Herzog & de Meuron: a tattooed house.

The famous Swiss architect Mario Botta built this library in Dortmund opposite the main station: a cone of glass in front of a sandstone cube.



The previous slide taken in the evening showed the impact of the library to the outside; this is now, the impact of the outside on the library: the city is mirrored in the house of the books.

Regional Library of
Dortmund (104942 bytes)

This is what it looks like from the inside.



Not much time, and just a short exemplary overview of old and new libraries in Germany. Be very welcome to IFLA 2003 in Berlin, and before or after do take some time to visit maybe also some other German libraries.

Thank you very much - see you in Berlin 2003!

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17. Juli, 2004