Principles for Good Libraries

Guidelines for Decision-Makers

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Social transformation as a result of libraries

Libraries are amongst the most important service providers in the science sector, and they provide a positive contribution towards the challenges posed by the German education sector:

> Life-long learning
> Cultural diversity
> Social integration
> Overcoming the "digital divide"
> Free access to the relevant information in our society

The statistics speak for themselves:

With over 200 million visitors per year, libraries are the most-used cultural and educational establishments:

> Every member of the German public visits a library on average at least twice a year.
> 670 000 people visit libraries every day.
> 11 million have a library card.
> Around 430 million items are borrowed from libraries every year.
>Library internet services worldwide are accessed millions of times a year.

The Federal Association of German Library and Information Associations – BID – provides this brochure to present you with an up-to-date picture of German libraries and their services for the education and science sectors in Germany.

You can see a new side to the effects that German libraries have with the "21 Good Reasons for Good Libraries" brochure; used in conjunction with these "Guidelines" it will give you points of reference for strategic decisions about the libraries within your scope of responsibility.

Performance and quality indicators for libraries in cities and communities

Acceptance, range, accessibility, premises and staff – these five dimensions describe the services and quality of public libraries.

With the available performance figures and recorded statistics, standards are set to ensure that public libraries are able to fulfil their social responsibilities in the long term.

Indicators

1. Acceptance of the range offered

The range of media and services offered at the library is based on customer demand. Acceptance of the range is measured through intensity of use. Borrowing media or using the media range and services on site, such as information enquiries or database research, are forms of library use. These forms of use are subject to the condition of visiting the library.

 Indicator for acceptance:
 > The library achieves at least 3 000 physical visits per 1 000 residents within its catchment area every year.

In future methods will be available to provide standardised, reliable measurement of virtual library visits, in other words the use of web-based library services (e.g. the use of electronic catalogues, e-books etc.). Initial results show that these virtual visits will be at least on the same scale as physical visits.

Schoolchildren are a particularly important target group for the library as an educational establishment. Particular importance is attached to their acceptance of the range offered.

 Indicator for acceptance by schoolchildren:
 > At least 60 % of schoolchildren in a local authority area are active users of the public library.

Customer satisfaction is regularly investigated – at least every two years – through surveys. For adults over 18 the evaluation of library services is graded on a scale of very good, good, satisfactory, adequate and unsatisfactory.

Indicator for customer satisfaction:
> More than 90% of customers grade library services as good or very good.

For children and young people, evaluation is concentrated on a scale of good, satisfactory and bad.

Indicator for customer satisfaction for children and young people:
> More than 75 % of children and young people grade library services as good.

2. Range offered

Libraries offer all the latest diverse media, ranging from printed media to audiovisual and electronic media. They guarantee access to innovative media forms such as digital media and internet publications. The quality of the media range offered is shown by how up-to-date it is, as well as the breadth and depth of the range.

Indicators of range quality:
> The library updates 10% of its media range every year.
> The library provides 2000 media units per 1000 residents within its catchment area in line with international standards.
> The library supplements its own range by taking part in inter-library media and document exchange schemes (external and regional inter-library loan).

These statistics are to be updated with regard to the innovative media forms when enough information is available.

3. Accessibility

Use of the library ranges is conditional on their accessibility, not only at a virtual level but also physically. Libraries orientate their accessibility, in other words opening hours, to the altered living circumstances and habits of their customers (e.g. professionals, all-day school students, university students, scientific researchers). Family-friendly opening hours are particularly important.

Indicator for accessibility:

> The opening hours of a municipal library cover at least 75% of the average local shop opening times.

Library locations (branches or mobile libraries) are selected so that they are linked with other public functions and places (shopping, learning and leisure) and well-situated for local public transport. This makes them accessible to members of the public with restricted mobility as well.

Indicator for accessibility:

> The distance from the library location is less than 2 kilometres for at least 75% of the population of a city.

4. Space

Public places characterise a community. They give identity, enable identification and have amenity value. Libraries are the public places that easily have the highest visitor frequency in a community. They serve as lively meeting points, places to learn and work for individuals and groups. Attractive room design reflects this function as a public place. The available space and furnishing are matched to the functions of a library.

Indicator for space provided:

> At least 60 m^2 per 1 000 residents within the catchment area is available as space for the library as a public place.

5. Human resources and development

Libraries are service facilities that provide services involving people to a high degree. For this reason appropriate staffing is essential. To provide their comprehensive range of services, libraries employ full-time staff with specialist qualifications, and ensure that they achieve further qualifications all the time. The figures quoted assume that up-to-date technology is used.

Indicator for human resources

> 0.33 full-time positions are provided per 1 000 residents within the catchment area to provide library facilities (or 1 full-time member of staff is available per 3000 residents).

Indicator for staff development

> At least 3% of available working days per employee are invested each year in the ongoing specialist qualification of staff (6 working days if a 5-day week is worked). The necessary material costs are taken from the library budget

Performance and quality indicators for university libraries

University libraries and libraries at universities of applied science (technical universities) are institutions that are almost universally funded by the federal state. They facilitate and support scientific research, scientific teaching and university degrees as well as advanced academic training. They provide interested members of the public with access to German and international research publications from the individual academic subjects. At the universities they help to make publications accessible to the public. The user can access specialist academic literature and subject-related information in the library, at his desk and in some cases also at home. The necessary material is provided in printed format in some cases, and in other cases via data networks. The university libraries are gradually transferring the printed material into a form that they can provide digitally. They are also instrumental in university teaching where the themes of libraries and information are concerned. They offer services to the academic infrastructure using the access routes needed by their users (e.g. through cooperatively-run library catalogues, portals, databases, internet services, learning platforms). Last but not least they operate an active customer information service.

Furthermore many university libraries have significant cultural and historical collections and other special material, which has to be developed, preserved, made accessible to users and presented. Alongside this function, a university library can also function as a regional or state library. It can also take on a role within the system to safeguard the inter-regional literature supply for Germany in a particular subject or specialist focus.

University libraries work with partner institutions in the same city. They are organised in a collaborative structure both within the federal state and at a national level, and they are extremely well networked to enable them to offer efficient, integrative services (e.g. agreeing on acquisitions, database licences, media servers, catalogues, long-distance loans, supplying documents electronically, archiving, regional and national availability). They are constantly developing innovative services to make academic work easier for their customers, as well as making it attractive to use electronic forms of publication – on site and at state level, but also through cooperation in Germany and internationally. *10*

Indicators

1. Legal guidelines for university libraries

The state Higher Education Law (Hochschulgesetz) mentions university libraries as institutions. It describes them as the central institution of each university, for which the university management is responsible. Further legal guidelines for universities describe the following basic responsibilities as a minimum for the university library: it covers all library institutions and collections within the university. It is responsible for providing the university with academic literature and information and is given the necessary resources to do so. It organises work processes relating to these responsibilities. Its manager has a university degree and a qualification as a librarian or equivalent experience.

2. Funding, building up collections and licences

The university library is a central institution of the university, which as an infrastructural establishment contributes significantly to the success of research and studies. Surveys show that the funds invested by a state in a university and in its library system are correlated with one another. Scientific rankings prove that the evaluation of what the library offers for students has some influence on the evaluation of academic subjects at universities. Analysis of operating figures has shown that the proportion of funding for an efficient university library from the funding body of a fully-functional university must be at least 5% (staffing and materials). In individual situations, the exact proportion is dependent on the size and organisation of the university.

Deciding factors for the efficiency of university libraries are the available funds for building up collections and buying licences. The level of funding provided is measured according to recognised requirement standards for specialist literature and information relating to academic subjects. These standards take into account market surveys (particularly with regard to range offered and prices), quality indices and user behaviour in each subject. The annual total should also take into account the number of research scientists in each subject and the level of research specialism at that university. To be competitive, the annual funding total for academic literature and databases needs to be at least as high as it is in universities with a comparable spectrum of subjects and of a similar size. Availability of the latest German and international specialist literature is crucial for working successfully on most academic questions. *11*

As a result of significant increases in the cost of research literature and information over the last 15 years, libraries have already lost some of their efficiency for universities. For this reason an annual supplement of 5% of funds for acquisition and licences is being provided to compensate for price increases and secure the efficiency of universities.

Negative effects of currency fluctuation (for instance cutting databases and journals that have previously been provided) are being compensated for selectively with supplements.

Providing students with specialist literature is an additional requirement alongside the provision of literature for research. Offering a comprehensive range of up-to-date literature and other material for students is a key requirement to ensure that more than 2 million students in Germany can complete their degree courses quickly and efficiently. University libraries are financially in a position to provide the necessary number of current specialist textbooks, journals and database licences according to requirements. If the number of students increases, the resources for this will increase accordingly.

3. Public access

The university library's most important target group is the members of its own university, particularly students and researchers. Beyond this specific purpose, university libraries are also open to all members of the public who would like to work with its academic collections and resources. The funding body finances the necessary additional expenses to fulfil this public contract.

4. Opening times and access to the services

University libraries have customer-friendly opening times that also include evenings. The central library at larger universities is open at least 80 hours a week. University libraries are also accessible at weekends.

Services provided by the university library that are transmitted via data networks are available to users without interruption and from the location of their choice, as long as there are no contractual regulations to prohibit this.

5. Workstation availability in the library

The university library is the study centre of its university. It provides workstations for academic work on the library premises according to the following guidelines: *12*

12-16 workstations per 100 students of arts subjects
    12-16 workstations per 100 students of social sciences
    08-12 workstations per 100 students of science subjects
    06-08 workstations per 100 students of medicine and engineering.
It is possible to access the university intranet and the internet from these workstations.

6. Involvement in teaching

For a degree course to be successful it is also crucial that students are able to research academic literature quickly, assess how current and relevant it is, as well as evaluate research results for their own study achievements (seminar papers, homework, dissertations). "Information skills" is a key qualification for research, teaching and studying and should become an integral curriculum component for academic subjects. University library staff are involved in the education process of the students – for instance through lectures, tutorials, library introductions, as well as contributions to electronic learning environments. The funding body provides the necessary funds for this in some cases as a supplement, depending on the concept. This takes additional staffing to the extent required into account.

7. Standardised search system

University libraries index material in a significantly more differentiated way than well-known search engines do. The user should be able to research the resources available in the library system and via data networks using the university library's standardised search system. The funding body finances coordination of the various references. It also finances machine-readable catalogues of old collections and partial collections for which older forms of reference exist (such as card catalogues and book-format catalogues).

8. Inter-library loan and document delivery

The university library is connected to the German inter-library loan system. It is usually in a position to provide the user with the items he has ordered from German libraries within a week. The funding bodies facilitate the delivery of documents subject to copyright protection for a standardised low one-off originator charge, preferably to the user's desk. Furthermore the university library funding body finances the rapid and cheap supply of literature for science and research in the same way for university members in their institutions to the extent required. *13*

9. Electronic publishing at the university

The funding body puts university libraries in a position to provide services for the infrastructure of electronic publishing at universities, for users' individual literature management and for the long-term provision of the electronically-stored research findings of university members. For this it provides resources to the value of at least 2% of the annual budget for building up collections and licences.

10. Converting printed works to network-based versions

Users of university libraries expect that essential sources, facts and data become available as full-text versions online for their research and studies. That applies in particular to books and journals that were in the collection previously in printed format. Furthermore the funding body provides the necessary resources so that university libraries can digitalise the library collection and make it accessible. To do this, the university libraries work in collaboration and provide each other with digitalised material within the terms of the law. The funding body also provides additional funds for access to digitalised printed works where a legal contract is necessary.

11. Responsibility for cultural heritage

It is not unusual for university libraries to have valuable old material and special collections that in some cases have been preserved for centuries and need to be handed down to future generations undamaged. To do this, specialised jobs present themselves – making the material available, preserving it carefully, restoring it, reproducing it and digitalising it, making it accessible in its home library and for inter-library loan, as well as presentation, for which planning and implementation concepts are required. The funding body provides resources for this to the value of at least a further 3% of the annual budget for building up collections and licences.

12. Qualified library staff

The work processes for the provision of services at a university library require specialist knowledge on the one hand, and a clear sense of customer orientation on the other hand. Both of these are taught in establishments for librarian training. At least 75% of university library staff have library-specific training and should be employed full-time. The library has an active staff development strategy. Appropriate opportunities for advanced training and development ensure the quality of service over the duration of their professional career. *14*

The funding body provides resources for specialist advanced qualification to the value of at least a further 3% of the annual budget for core staffing costs (not including social contributions).

13. Buildings and equipment

The federal states should guarantee at least the same level of financing as the existing federal/state funding for university libraries. The funding body organises the buildings and equipment in line with the industry standard for building and utilisation planning for university libraries. The funding body finances the library information system at the university as the technology core of library services, which must be kept up to the latest standards in technology.

14. Ongoing improvements to the services

The university library is continually improving its services and develops them in respect of their users. To do this, it uses evaluations provided by the university management as a basis, but also evaluations given by library users, who are surveyed regularly with regard to the services (for instance every two years), as well as results from rankings and benchmarks. The funding body finances necessary improvements by providing resources.