

# Summary



**The Blind Librarian – To Document the Unseen / Unemployment Increasing Against the Trend – Little Understanding of the Skills of the Visually Handicapped (Steffen Heizere-der)**

(pp. 178 – 182)

Jochen Schäfer is seated with his back to the entrance at his workspace in the school library of the German Academic Institute for the Blind (Blista) in Marburg. Carefully he picks up a journal issue, unfolds it and lays it accurately on the scanner next to his PC. The 42-year-old is responsible for the acquisition and cataloging of journals about blindness. What's special about Schäfer is that he has been blind since birth.

A certified technical assistant for library and information services (in German: FaMI), he works entirely on his own, with only technical support to help him. After scanning, the screen reader translates the text in to a tactile alphabet. With a further device, the Braille terminal, Schäfer can read the text.

Schäfer has been working at Blista for 17 years. Nonetheless he remains dependent upon a social welfare agency which makes it possible for him to hold this job as an external employee.

Just how hard it is for handicapped on the job market is evident in the statistics of the Federal Employment Agency. In October 2014, 178,000 severely handicapped were registered as unemployed, eight percent more than in 2009. But the overall national unemployment statistic fell by 14% in the same period. Moreover, the number of skilled workers and the average length of unemployment for the severely handicapped is noticeably higher.

Uwe Boysen, chairperson of the German Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired Who Study and Work (DVBS), believes that the fault lies primarily with employers, who know too little about the availability of technical support, state subsidies, and the training and skills of the blind or visually impaired. And the sometimes slow (often months-long) process of getting grants approved for technical support devices only exacerbates this situation.

**The Library as Innovative Citizens' Platform / Paradigmatic Change with Dokk1 in Aarhus: Focusing on People Rather Than on Media (Knud Schulz)**

(pp. 206 – 210)

In Denmark more than half of all public libraries are now open many hours in the week without any trained library personnel present. During these extended opening hours, users can open the door to the library with their user card and PIN, and then access all resources in the library.

This expansion can be considered an expression of trust between citizens and libraries as state-run institutions. In general, users take good care of library materials and facilities. Only a few cases of misuse or damage have been reported. The users' presence is registered through the use of their library card and there is, moreover, video surveillance via CCTV. Citizens use the library during these extended hours as a social gathering spot and, for example, for classes or for discussion groups. In this way, the ownership of the library has been transferred from the community's employees to the citizenry.

This model has enabled the new, 12,000-square-meter library of Aarhus, the Dokk1, to offer additional opening hours without library-trained staffing. The library facility provides a framework for individual use, and lets numerous programs be offered by private individuals and partner organizations without the intermediacy of library staff. The construction of Dokk1 represents a paradigmatic change: focus on physical media has been replaced by a focus on people and their interrelationships.

Societal demand for innovation and citizens' demand for forward-looking library programs and for innovative developments will not stop here. The promotion and implementation of participatory innovation will be essential to the library in the future. Libraries are pioneers in the development of new relationships between citizens and their society. This is a renewal of the vision of democratic public institutions as cooperatively owned property.

**The Library as Partner / On the Advantages Of Cooperating With Other Institutions – a Model Study (Anne Helbig, Dirk Wissen)**

(pp. 214 – 217)

Frankfurt an der Oder regards itself as a city of music, sport, and academia and describes itself intentionally within a European context due to its location at the Polish border. The City and Regional Library of Frankfurt (SRB) derives its strategic goals from the city's profile. The motto »Forging Strength, Expanding Cooperation« also strengthens the library in its own mission.

Due to its location at the German-Polish border, the SRB cooperates with three other public and academic libraries located in Frankfurt (Oder) and Slubice, thus helping to strengthen the sense of unity in this twin-city metropolitan region, and the citizen's loyalty to their respective libraries.

The library's program of events is an important contribution to the region's cultural education. It includes media boxes, theme boxes, adult-child reading partnerships, puppet theater, picture-book cinema, classroom book sets, library tours, and guidance sessions for student term papers.

In order to find new partners and volunteers, the SRB issued invitations twice in 2014 to a »volunteer's coffee hour« in order to inform potential helpers about opportunities to be of assistance within a personalized setting. This proved very successful and 250 events per year are now organized by through such partnerships.

It is not only important to offer services and hold special events, but also to make them known to citizens through good publicity and continual development of networking relationships. The SRB endeavors to advance the positive aspects of such cooperation. Cooperation between various organizations and agencies, as well as with business and industry, offers new perspectives by expanding the scope and providing crisis-proof anchorage of services within the community.

*Translated by Martha Baker*