Summary

Service to the Public – A Continual Process / The Three-Anchor Concept of the Bielefeld Public Library's Neumarkt Branch (Harald Pilzer)
(pp. 356 – 359)

The City Library of Bielefeld has established a three-anchor concept for its reference services: self-service technology, a lobby with staff ready to help visitors, and a convenient »Information and Customer Services« desk. In this layout the reception area takes on a key role. Architecturally and ergonomically it is equipped with a counter and a height-adjustable computer workspace, in accord with suggests from staff members. Its function is to facilitate the »visitor flow« at the library entrance, to be a first stop for information seekers, and to lead to quick »trouble-shooting«.

It is also the liaison point for staff members who support customers who are using self-service machines and is intended to be pro-active. This involves moving about in front of the counter, always being approachable and quick to help, readily anticipating problems or insecurities, helping customers avoid possible disappointment or frustration with the technology. Another of the duties is to direct users to the information counter and the reference desk on the 2nd floor, or even to the help-desk of the city archives, in a competent, goal-oriented, and accepting manner. In any case every effort is made to avoid waiting lines or indiscreetness. Time-consuming reference questions and extensive information about the media collection or a user's account are not dealt with here and any emotionally-laden debates about overdues or fines are also not conducted at this point. The staff also takes care of the nearby media sorting system. The coordinator of the reception area is responsible for assigning staff to whatever tasks need attention at any given time.

Africa on the Go / Promoting Literature and Reading With the Help of Mobile Telephones in Africa (Brigitte Döllgast)
(pp. 380 – 383)

In at least one way the streets of African cities like Accra, Abidjan and Johannesburg are hardly any different than those of Athens, New York, or Munich. Nearly everyone has a mobile phone in their hand. Statistically, about 65% of all households in sub-Sahara Africa have at least one mobile phone. And the annual growth rate in recent years has been at least 25%. Hence, Africa has the highest growth rate in mobile technology in the world.

It can be assumed that Africa is simply skipping the phase of using desktop devices to access Internet and moving directly to mobile access. The mobile phone offers the opportunity to break out of the vicious circle of downward-spiralling desolation that has gripped the continent for so long – at least in some fields. While Germany is aiming to promote reading with mobile devices such as laptops, the challenge facing Africa is to get texts onto simple mobile devices. For example, MxitReach is beginning to provide free access not only to health-related information, assistance for agricultural concerns, but also reading material for young people. Especially in the field of children's and youth literature, however, there are initiatives that put emphasis on providing stories in as many languages as possible. The children's literature portal »Nali'bali« which went online in 2012 is attempting to reach parents in the hope that they will read their stories aloud to their children. Making literature available is, of course, not the same as reading promotion. Critical to literature and reading promotion remains, even in the mobile form, the role of mediation. Libraries can play an important role as multipliers.

»Bang Bang« Instead of »Shhhh« / On the Image of Librarians in Comics (Ann Eichelbaum)
(pp. 384 – 386)

In 2014 Ann Eichelbaum wrote her Bachelor's thesis at the Technical University of Potsdam on the topic »The Image of Librarians in Comics«. Using a selection of examples, she investigated the portrayal of the profession in comic books and comic strips.

Librarians' physical appearance in comics can be divided into two general categories: men in suits and women with low-cut necklines. In all cases they were strikingly attractive. The librarians in comics debunk the usual cliché of a profession full of old-maids. The author also dealt with the personality of selected figures, such as the popular motif of the outsider. Matching the stereotype of a bookworm or book nerd does not seem to be negative within the context of comics, since this is offset by the character's attractiveness.

In order to portray a librarian in a comic, he or she is placed against the background of books. Since the standard librarian is seen carrying books from point A to point B, Eichelbaum suspects that this serves primarily to identify the character as a librarian. Although librarians are shown in motion, the comic viewer is given no information about the purpose of their activity. Above all librarians in comics are protectors of knowledge. The comic's protagonists turn to the librarian when they are stuck with a problem. Hence, librarians play a key role as facilitator in comics. They have good advice or information and point others in the right direction. The stereotype of a librarian whispering »shhhh« is shown in parody. Many of the examples presented in this thesis show librarians with battle skills. A so-called kick-ass image replaces one of passivity or stuffiness. For the comic librarians »shhhh« is replaced with »bang bang«.

Translated by Martha Baker