

Summary



»We'll Meet You Half-way« / Mobile Libraries Yesterday and Today (Johannes von Freyermann)
(pp. 642 – 647)

Today we find mobile libraries, or bookmobiles, in many variations all over the world. In Germany the umbrella term for the mobile library is »Fahrbibliothek«, or driving library, since all the 89 institutions with such a service use only buses or trucks.

In Germany the first evidence of a transportable library can be traced back to 1916. To offset the monotony of life in the battle trenches, the military ordered transportable libraries to the front. The first regular public mobile library was operated by the City Library of Worms between 1925 and 1928. After the second world war, mobile libraries provided inhabitants in areas of West Germany, where many buildings had been destroyed by war, with reading matter. From the late 1940s until the end of the 1970s the number of mobile libraries in the Federal Republic of Germany grew continuously. Then, as a result of increasingly tight municipal budgets and a sharp increase in operating costs for such vehicles, many mobile libraries were taken out of service.

What advantages do mobile libraries have? They are flexible and can travel to various locations. They can readily adapt their routes to changes in the infrastructure and the population they serve. Stops can be added or dropped at short notice. However, the relatively complicated automotive technology requires a high level of maintenance at specialized garages run by the vehicle manufacturers, and hence, is costly. Are politicians and public administrators prepared to allocate funds for the initial high investment and the subsequent recurring maintenance costs? When it comes time to replace a vehicle, those who must make this decision often cringe at the sight of the high costs and begin to re-think the future of their mobile library.

Socially-oriented Library Services Revisited / Been There, Done That Before: It's Worth Looking into the Archival Records of Social and Mobile Library Services (Karsten Schuldt)
(pp. 656 – 658)

Rather than starting all over again, libraries interested in socially-oriented services and mobile library work could build and expand upon the relatively extensive work done in the 1970s. Karsten Schuldt's article for BuB provides an overview.

At the moment there seems to be a certain interest in »social issues« although there are few concrete examples to look at. Rather than responding with »innovative« project ideas, one could return with confidence to the debates of past decades. Socially-oriented library service – which encompassed prison libraries and homes, as well as all kinds of outreach programs – was the subject of projects and discussions at the end of the 1970s and early 1980s. It would be beneficial to continue along those lines when looking into the opportunities for mobile library work today.

Discussions about socially-oriented library work arose from the public debates about establishing a more democratic, socially conscious, and rational or scientific – i.e., guided by sociological expertise – society in the 1970s. It was couched in terms such as social justice, planning, and other sociological concepts and thought patterns. It all culminated in a project run by the German Library Institute and its all-inclusive project report. After that, the topic seemed to disappear from the library literature. Only discussions about library service in prisons continued for some years longer. It is high time, then, to take up these issues again.

The Library World Well-Received in the Largest Small Town of America / A Report of the 82nd IFLA World Conference in Columbus, Ohio – An Update to the IFLA Trend Report (Stephan Matthias, Simone Waidmann)
(pp. 698 – 701)

In August 2016 the 82nd IFLA World Congress, with its 3,200 participants from all corners of the earth, took place in Columbus, Ohio. Since an update to the 2013 IFLA Trend Report had just been published, this was, of course, a predominating topic during the congress. In the original report, experts, who mostly were not directly involved in library work, had identified five trends which would have a decisive influence on the global field of information in the following years. The question of how libraries could respond to the concomitant challenges was the theme of the speech by IFLA's president, Donna Scheeder, during her President's Session. With Mark Surman from Mozilla and Fred Von Lohmann from Google, two non-librarians made up half of the podium speakers, which also included Jack Cushman from Harvard University and Maura Marx from the Institute of Museum and Library Services in Washington, D.C. Mark Surman, for example, provided a long-range overview of developments in the Internet itself and in its usage. While its original concept foresaw an open, free, and democratic Internet, which everyone could participate in and contribute to, there are signs, today, of increasingly stronger tendencies of centralization, which can lead to many people being left out. The largest producers of apps are located in the Western world, primarily in the U.S.A. and in Europe, and produce for a certain kind of clientele. Although the fastest-growing markets for users of smart phones are in the developing and emerging countries, they are not being given much attention. In addition to the President's Session visitors could attend numerous other meetings organized by the various IFLA sections. Very specific issues of library practice were addressed, for example, in the sections »Document Delivery and Resource Sharing« and »Reference and Information Services«.

Translated by Martha Baker