

Summary



Provenance Research and Restitution / Books Looted by Nazis at the State and University Library of Hamburg (Anna von Villiez)

(pp. 732 – 737)

At the Carl von Ossietzky State and University Library (SUB HH) in Hamburg hundreds of volumes plundered by the Nazis have stood on shelves since the end of World War Two, bearing witness to the forced emigration or murder of their rightful owners. Parallel to the general mood which predominated in Germany in the post-war years, the SUB HH long avoided taking a look at its responsibility for this legacy. When requests for restitution began to arrive shortly after the end of the war from the families affected, the library reacted with delaying tactics and dismissive answers. The chief concern after 1945 was to begin the much needed reconstruction, since large parts of the collections had been destroyed in the war-time bombings, in which the library had been especially hard hit. Another decisive factor was the generally defensive position taken during discussions about the library's own role during the Nazi regime. For nearly a decade now, the SUB HH has been involved in provenance research and continues to search the collections for questionable holdings.

In the meantime there have been 25 cases of restitution involving over 600 volumes which could be returned to the heirs of the rightful owners. The families have reacted in a variety of ways, usually very emotionally. Often the biographical research conducted by the SUB HH has sparked a renewed interest in a family's own history. And this might also involve a painful process of remembrance. But the return of the plundered books has a high symbolic value for those families. The expropriation of a family's cultural possessions was tantamount to the theft of important memories and family history. In order to continue to remember the improper accession of looted books, the SUB HH has decided to retain the bibliographic entries in their catalogue. The provenance notation now indicates restitution of the respective book to its rightful heirs.

BibScouts – the Mobile Information Service at the University of Würzburg Library / Roaming Scouts Take Load Off Information Desk – Assistance with Photocopiers, Printers, and Scanners

(Franziska Borkert)

(pp. 774 – 777)

Since the winter semester 2014/2015 the university library (UB) in Würzburg has been employing BibScouts in the main library. These are student assistants who help library users – primarily other students – with photocopying, printing, scanning, and even finding books. The BibScouts do not have a fixed location, but move about as needed. They are recognizable in their blue vests with the university crest and the words »Questions? I'm happy to help« on their backs. Employed only when classes are in session, the BibScouts are a valuable supplement to the library staff based at the information desk.

After four successful semesters of operation, the university library can ascertain that the service has been well-received. It is quite clear that the trained library staff is being relieved of dealing with basic technical issues. The result of two staff surveys which have been conducted since the service was introduced have confirmed their usefulness. The surveys also highlighted the good relations and helpful interactions between staff and the BibScouts. As a result of this successful service, the library hopes to see an increase in user satisfaction because help and support can be found whenever and wherever it is needed. Use of this service is especially heavy at the beginning of each semester, and declines slowly as the semester proceeds; then, as end-of-semester examinations approach, the need for support, especially with the photocopiers, again increases.

A Role Model for Libraries? The Transparent Museum at the Kunsthalle Hamburg (Andrea Kasper)

(pp. 778 – 781)

As part of its modernization process, Hamburg's Kunsthalle has created a »Transparent Museum« which serves to make the work of the museum more visible and understandable to its visitors. Could this also be applied to libraries? What form could this take, and what advantages would it offer?

Surely it would be worthwhile making the library profession's own activities more transparent and comprehensible to outsiders. It would also provide an opportunity to shift greater attention to and establish a specific framework for a presentation of the profession's services and competencies – such as library pedagogy – to library users, cooperating partners, and funding agencies. Unlike in libraries, this is a perfectly normal area of activity in cultural institutions such as theaters and museums.

Perhaps the Hamburg model could be applied to libraries in the near future. Recently built libraries and renovated libraries (e.g., Stuttgart, Hanau) give cause for an optimistic outlook. Not only have these building projects led to a re-positioning of the institution, but also allowed space for new kinds of activities. Naturally the allocation of permanent space for a »glass« library might, at first glance, involve giving less room to the learning and meeting areas of the library. Ultimately the space available is often limited and every centimeter even fought over.

Nonetheless a transparent library would offer a good chance for informing users about library operations, for initiating discussions, and for presenting the library as a companion and supporter of the everyday concerns and interests of its users. This could, in turn, strengthen the image of the library as an institution which supports their cultural, educational, and leisure-time activities. It underpins the hope that the city's residents will see even more value in their library and become even more enthusiastic about the library's wide range of services and activities.

Translated by Martha Baker