

Summary



The Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin's Location in Haus Unter den Linden Re-Opened / 7 Reading Rooms with 660 Seats – Support for Research and Cultural Inquiries from around the World

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The main house of one of world's most renown libraries has received extensive renovation and modernisation with the help of federal funding. According to the report issued by the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Prussian Cultural Heritage, staff members in the seven reading rooms (which can seat 660 visitors) and in the closed stacks are again ready to support research and cultural inquiries. The complete range of digital or analogue collections, which have been developed over many centuries, is once again accessible in the library's two locations, Haus Unter den Linden and Haus Potsdamer Straße. The actual date on which the reading rooms can be used by visitors will depend upon state regulations dealing with the coronavirus pandemic.

The re-opening of the Berlin State Library building along the promenade Unter den Linden took place at the end of January 2021 in a festive ceremony that was broadcast live via Internet. It was attended by the President of the German Bundestag, Wolfgang Schäuble, the State Minister for Culture and Media, Monika Grütters, and the General Director of the Berlin State Library – Prussian Cultural Heritage, Barbara Schneider-Kempf.

In his address, Wolfgang Schäuble stated: »Article 5 of our Basic Law guarantees the fundamental right to ,furnish oneself with information from generally accessible sources without hindrance.' The task that this imposes on libraries changes in nature with the demands of the times. In the past, libraries were seen as information monopolists. Nowadays, it is their job to prevent commercial monopolies of information. In a digitized public realm, especially, we need neutral and reliable institutions that document knowledge, make it accessible – and yes, even filter it! And put readers in a position to evaluate information critically.«

One Library, Many Faces / Opportunities and Possibilities for School Libraries as Media Centres (Jana Haase, Dominik Theis)

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As media centres school libraries can contribute to the self-development of their students by creating rooms for gatherings, for doing schoolwork and for social interactions. In this way they make a contribution to independent learning, student collaboration and the organisation of free time outside the classroom. School libraries can help ensure that educational opportunities are equitable and meet the latest standards.

In terms of equal opportunity this means, above all, the acquisition, lending and maintenance of technical devices and the requisite IT infrastructure; but it also involves the regular training of mediators in schools in order to create, store, revise and disseminate open educational resources (OER). For years, these activities have been seen as one more case of work-in-progress. Till today there are no exemplary planning models for how to deal with mobile devices over the course of a normal school day. Traditional forms of teacher training have failed to prepare for the necessary digitalisation of today's school routines.

The media centres that would be needed have been envisioned by experts as sites for open learning within the school building. The modern school library provides places for gatherings, studying and interacting both for learners and instructors. It offers space and materials needed for independent learning, for new forms of collaborative instruction, and also for leisure time activities. It is most essential to have a plan and for the staff to be willing to communicate and cooperate. A school library functions as a media centre for digital technologies only when it is integrated into the school's curriculum and instructional organisation, regularly used by faculty members who integrate it into their activities and always equipped with the most up-to-date technology.

Together We Are Less Alone / School Libraries in Educational Partnerships in the City of Frankfurt am Main (Hanke Sühl)

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In Frankfurt am Main school libraries are a basic element of school culture in every newly opened school. The level of investment is anchored in the state budget which is contractually agreed upon by Hesse's coalition government. This political endorsement forms the basis of a long-term and sustainable approach to school library work in Frankfurt.

Through the establishment of the School Library Advisory Office (sba) at the City Library of Frankfurt am Main in 1974 special focus was placed on activities for and with school libraries. Since then, the network around the sba has grown steadily. Since the year 2000 the number of school libraries has increased by nearly 200 percent. Today the sba maintains a network of 116 school libraries and provides services to all schools in Frankfurt. The sba staff could not be increased in the same proportion, but the activities at school libraries in Frankfurt am Main show that even with limited resources much can be achieved.

Customer orientation is an important, perhaps the most important building block in sba's day-to-day work on behalf of Frankfurt's schools. Along with excellent services and materials, customer orientation requires above all systematic and well-organised processes. To maintain such services despite limited personnel and financial resources, while still keeping an ear to the ground, the sba trusts in educational partnerships. Cooperation with local organisations – schools, associations, foundations and special interest initiatives – is one of the foundational principles of sba's successful library work. Even beyond the municipal institutions and political bodies, sba is an active member of other networks and has gained numerous supporters in the fields of education, culture and business.

Translated by Martha Baker