

Summary



A Dynamic Venue for Arts and Culture / On Art at the City Library of Stuttgart (Meike Jung)
(pp. 306 – 311)

»The City Library of Stuttgart strives to be a dynamic venue for arts and culture.« So the wording of one of the library's core principles. Visual arts, music, literature, and performing arts are singled out for presentation in exhibitions, concerts, readings, performances, and festivals as well as other less common formats. With the library's low-threshold of access, visitors can experience both experimental and traditional, innovative and exemplary events; this is made possible, in part, thanks to its close networking with other cultural institutions.

The idea to establish a Graphothek, an art lending library, in Stuttgart dates back to 1973. After the initial purchases and investments were made, it was opened in March 1976 with 211 works of art. Today the collection comprises 2700 original works from a wide range of regional and international artists. In the 1990s the German magazine »Capital« tested the art libraries of Germany and designated Stuttgart, along with Cologne and Berlin, as the flagships of German art lending libraries in terms of quality of the collection and the status of the artists they include. Stuttgart's Graphothek performs an important contribution to the promotion of artists, not only financially through its purchases, but also by enabling young and upcoming artists to establish themselves in the cultural landscape. Since 2011 the Graphothek has attracted more attention than ever. It is enthroned on the top floor of new main library building, directly adjacent to the gallery, where its generous glass walls pique the curiosity of visitors. The artworks are included in the library catalog, although the images cannot be replicated there due to copyright protection. But a digital image catalog and a slide catalog can be consulted on-site in the Graphothek.

Checkpoints, Street Blockades and Political Instability / Mobile Libraries in the Middle East (Andreas Lüscho, Samira Safadi)
(pp. 334 – 337)

Since 2010 the German-French Cultural Center (FGCC) of Ramallah has been operating a mobile library for children called the Bibliobus. It visits schools in West Jordan and in Jerusalem which offer German and/or French as a foreign language. Along with its collection of books, CDs, and DVDs in foreign languages, there are also activities (such as games, puzzles, or arts-and-crafts) focused on Germany, France, and the learning of foreign languages. In many cases this bus provides students with the only opportunity to apply foreign language skills outside of the classroom. An encounter with native speakers may in fact be the highlight of their school day. Hence the bus is a mobile and visible advertisement for the Goethe-Institut Ramallah and the Institut Français, which operate the center together and sponsor various joint projects.

The challenges facing the Bibliobus have already been described in the May 2013 issue of BuB. Now after four years it is time to take a new look at the project, giving an update and describing new developments.

Finland as False Role Model? / Library Service in Scandinavia is Considered Exemplary, but the Profession is under Pressure due to Budget Cuts and Library Closings (Armi Roth-Bernstein-Wiesner)
(pp. 345 – 349)

Soon after the latest election, the new government of Finland set out to re-define the obligatory activities of local governments. Contrary to all election promises, expenditures for cultural activities were cut back in 2015. The government pompously declared that it intended to strengthen the local governments' rights of self-determination. While they receive federal funds for their obligatory duties, the allocation of these funds is up to their own discretion. In effect this means that while Finland's Library Law guarantees the existence of the public library and its professional management, libraries must compete with other institutions for all other necessities. If the local government puts more stock in having a new ice-hockey rink, the library is likely to face hard times.

Smaller communities have often had difficulties fulfilling their legal obligations; in some cases this has led to the sharing of personnel – with examples ranging from the head of a library to the children's librarian. The number of libraries and branch locations has subsequently been declining steadily over the past decades. In many regions the once independent small town library has been replaced with a bookmobile or even a book-ship. Yet economic recessions have never lead to a complete shutdown of local library services. The new library law, which went into effect this past January, has eliminated the fears for the future of librarianship. For the first time it includes a definition of the tasks of public libraries. Along with the traditional duties (to provide access to knowledge, collection development and maintenance, promotion of literature and reading), libraries are also tasked with promoting social and cultural dialogue.

Translated by Martha Baker