

**Participation in the 100 German Librarian s Conference at Berlin Germany
& Visit to libraries in Berlin
June 6-11, 2011**

**REPORT
By
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I am extremely thankful to Bibliothek and Information International at Bibliothek and Information Deutschland , (BID) Berlin, Germany, for their generosity in supporting my participation to the 100 German Librarian’s conference at Berlin.



I had an opportunity to visit Germany earlier in professional capacity and got first hand experience to see the functioning of academic libraries in 2007-2008. Having retained many of my contacts with German professionals, I had a chance to return and interact with the professionals from different parts of Germany, as well as, other countries on a larger platform this year in June 2011. I was informed about the Anniversary 100 German Librarians Conference by Mr. Andreas Klingenberg, a fellow professional from Hochschule Ostwestfalen-Lippe University of Applied Sciences, Detmold with whom I worked on several areas of information literacy. The Theme ‘Libraries for future- Future for libraries’ is not only challenging for German libraries but also in the global context. The themes for anniversary celebrations focused on range of topics, for example, the challenges which libraries will face in future, what the society expects of them and what the libraries have to offer. At the same time the anniversary also called for retrospection , on what was achieved in the last years and where we stand today.

The conference was organized at one of the largest convention and entertainment center the Estrel, situated in the far south east corner of Berlin. I was happy to get an invitation from the organizers well ahead of time, in early May, and was requested to present my paper at the conference on 8th June 2011. While all preparation were made, the only limitation at my end was the finances. I was strongly advised by the organizers to get in touch with the Bibliothek Information International. The response from them was overwhelmingly positive and they were pleased to provide some grants that subsidized my visit to the Berlin conference. Thanks, to the generosity of this organization.

I arrived the historical city of Berlin on 6th afternoon along with my Indian Colleague from Karnataka . The conference commenced in the morning of 7th June with registrations and active discussions. The inaugural opening event was held in the evening with a grand opening in concert hall of Berlin. The greetings and welcome address were conveyed by Ms Susanne Riedel- the chair person of German Professional Association of Libraries, Ms Claudia Zinke- the secretary of Education, Youth and Family services of Germany, Ms Ellen Tise -the President of IFLA , Dr Ulrich Hohoff and other officials.

There were more than 4500 participants from various parts of Germany and foreign countries. At the conference venue I was happy to met Tina Baumgart from BI-International who played a very active role in my visit, she handed over the grant and an invitation form the Mayor of Berlin, Mr Ingeborg Junge-Reyer. A reception to welcome the foreign delegates on the occasion of 100 German Librarians Congress was hosted in a Magnificent Hall of Pillars of the Berlin Town hall, in Berlin-Mitte.

The conference presentations were organized in a highly professional manner and held in the various halls of the Estrel convention center. There were speakers both in German and English language. The convention was able to pursue genuine discussions and gave concrete consideration to cross border networks. There were more than 350 lectures on various topics, panel discussions, posters shows and other interesting events .

A large no of interesting themes were raised for discussions in various sessions, most of the topics were quite thought provoking and innovative, and, provided new ideas on professional trends and current developments.



The sessions I attended at the conference, provided information on teaching and learning and about free flow of information in academic enterprise. I was also fortunate to hear many program speakers on open access models, resource description and access, open access repositories, search and discovery platform of world cat. As there were simulation sessions, I attended the session that interested me most i.e. the Networked libraries, service provider for networked data and linked open access data.

The speakers from OCLC research Dublin, gave an interesting talk on changing information behaviors of users and making library content appeal to digital information seekers. Another interesting talk was on Search and discovery platform of WorldCat at local level.

My talk on library legislations in India was held on 8th morning, in my overview presentation I highlighted the situation of libraries in India, the library acts, the role of govt. and the National knowledge commission(NKC) in galvanizing and improving public libraries services in digital era. In this session, I was also able to make interesting discussions on library legislations of Germany and copy write issues.

Some of the other programs that I attended at the Bibliothekartag 2011 reminds me of a truly global event. A talk by UK speaker on role of Libraries in social inclusion and initiatives made by the public library of Nottingham gave interesting ideas. I was highly impressed by the initiative made by their library for connecting the people from Asian communities, facilities like language cafes, increasing understanding of people through art and craft and working with local refugee organizations. Other interesting talk that inspired me was on editions of Russian catalogue on lost books treasure and the changing role of Primary sources of information at American research libraries.



The visit arranged to several libraries in Berlin as “Long Night of Libraries” on account of 100 Anniversary German librarian was commendable. Forty libraries staged reading, music, workshops and performances from 5 pm till midnight for the delegates. Guided tours to spectacular new library buildings in Berlin was also on offer.

I am grateful to Mr. Andreas Klingenberg who guided me in the evening of on 9th June to Mittelpunktbibliothek Adalbertstraße- interkulturelle Familienbibliothek, branch of city bibliothek-Berlin a very well organized public library which got renovated recently, Here I had a chance to see the video books which are quite unusual in Indian public libraries. The cultural activities like singing and dances, organized to attract people to visit public libraries was quite fascinating. I also had a chance to see the Salsa dance on Turkish music during my visit to this library in the evening hours. Later we visited the Volkswagen Technical University library at 10 pm, and saw some of the most advance technology used by them in facilitating information services, particularly, the RFID system and the mechanized transportation and sorting of books from return counter.

On 10th June, I was happy to visit the prestigious Humboldt University in Berlin known for several Nobel laureates. It was interesting to get acquainted with the historical university building and also know about the functioning of one of the oldest Academic library in the city.

An interesting difference that I observed in libraries between Germany and India was a strong infrastructure, art work, and attractive ambiance. The concept of art work in Indian academic libraries is not very popular, I believe art plays a very important role not only in creating good ambience but also attracting the readers.



In between the programs and sessions I had an opportunity to meet the director of National Library of Medicine, Dr Ursula Zangl and exchanged few words on functioning of German medicine library also dealing with nutrition, environment and agriculture. I also ran in to few delegates from OCLC, Public libraries of UK, and project coordinators from GOPORTIS Leibniz library network and some Indian delegates..

I was informed that German public libraries were on the verge of closing down due to the shortage of funding from the state government. The German library association members were galvanizing and creating awareness among people to come forward and support for the need of public libraries and to stop them from closing down. It was heartening to hear sentiments expressed by Norbert Lammert, President of German Bundestag (i.e. parliament) at the opening event : that “ Libraries are well worthwhile even if they are not profitable”. I would like to add that libraries are indispensable and certainly not for profit making but serving the society by providing valuable information and knowledge.

During one of the discussions with German delegates I was told that there was stagnation in career advancement and promotions of library professionals Germany, I was really impressed by the movement carried out by the German Library Association and was delighted to fill out a card for the support of the cause, which would be forwarded to influence the government authorities.

It was also interesting meeting a number of Information Sciences students from Cologne University of Applied Sciences and interacting with them on trends of using subject e-books among students and the job prospects in Germany. The students were also quite inquisitive on knowing the metric system in India and the functioning of academic libraries. I believe the students really benefit from such conversations in conferences.



I also visited the various exhibitions organized within the framework of the congress . It was an excellent opportunity to review the latest developments and innovations and to tap into exhibitor's expertise and knowledge . I had the chance to see for the first time the de-acidification machine for preventing the books from getting brittle, besides the advanced technologies in RFID system for facilitating library management and security system. I also had the chance to meet and interact with the foreign publishers like the Kluwer, CABI , Ovid and to know about their plant and Agro related electronic databases which was my area of interest.



The cycling event managed by Danish Library professional was an adventure with a cause and a very good association of books with cycle, both very easily accessible to common man. The event took place for the first time in 2011 in cooperation with German, Danish and Finnish Library professionals . The purpose of cycling for libraries was to gather a group of professional across the world and to discuss the strategic issues of the libraries in seminar along the route. The event started at Danish National Library Courtyard and ended to the 100th Deutsche Bibliothekartag.

I was really impressed by the event and carried back home very sweet memories and great ideas.



Later during the congress I managed to join a group of participants on a quick tour to visit some museums, the German Bundestag (parliament), Konzerthaus, the Brandenburg gate and the surrounding areas of the diverse multicultural Berlin city. I was truly impressed with the friendliness and hospitality of the people I came across in Germany. The most welcoming was the complementary use of the public transport system for the delegates traveling from different places across Germany.

I believe conferences are important tools for professional development. Not only do they offer informative and educational interactions but also provide an opportunity to meet and socialize with fellow professionals and to see the changing vibrancy of the profession.

Altogether I had a great learning experience and interaction with German and information professionals and also had a chance to learn about current developments, latest professional trends in the international information and library sector. The convention gave me new ideas to increase professionalism and to look at the challenges back home in a new way. I feel I was able to make good networking with the professionals in Germany and the European Union. I returned back home via Düsseldorf spending some quality time with friends in the city of Essen.



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