

# Public Library of Bremen Business Visit Report

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## Foreword

"The library is everyone's university in the street corner." This description of library, made by Public Library of Bremen President Barbara Lison, let us highly expect to see the library which located in this German fairy tale city. Supporting by BI-International Foundation, we were lucky to visit Public Library of Bremen from Jun/M 2014. The trip lasted 2 weeks, during which we visited Public Library of Bremen, Library of Bremen University, Alfred Wegener Institute Library, and Bremen Confucius Institute. By doing academic exchanges and on-site training, we got to know the library management, customer service, digital library, etc, in German libraries.

Following is our report in detail.

### I. Glance of Bremen City

Bremen City, the capital city of Bremen state, is also the center city of northwestern Germany. It crosses the two states of the Lufthansa, "Small" and "Beauty" are the two keywords of this city. The lovely bronze statues of donkey, dog, cat, chicken that we see now and there in the city, sometimes makes us falling into a fairy tale world. Bremen City Library, the major place of our visit, is locating in the center of this fairy tale city. With the historical city culture, it's an amazing trip that we spent in this 112 years old public library.

### II. Image of Public Library of Bremen

Public Library of Bremen is positioning itself as a place where readers spend for their lifelong learning. It constantly enhances reader's reading abilities through comprehensive service as well as provides related training of leisure and vocational education for readers. The library hopes to show its functionality, creativity, and attractiveness by holding various events.



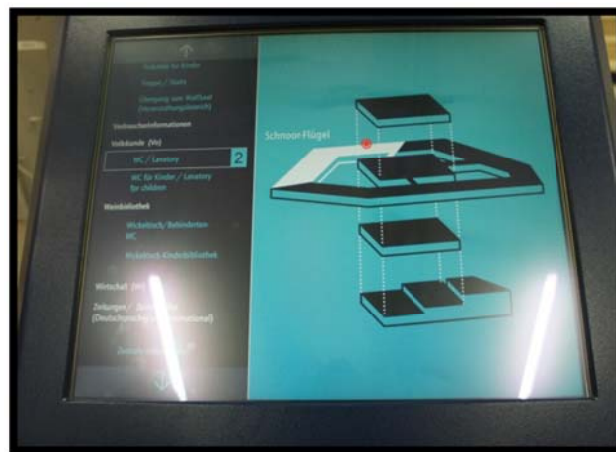
Public Library of Bremen

Public Library of Bremen system includes one central library and seven branches, while the seven branches are consist of bus library, prison library and hospital library and other characteristic libraries. These libraries provide more professional, convenient, and diversified services to readers.



Bus Library

Our trip is mainly to visit its central library- Public Library of Bremen. The nifty bronze statue pig standing at the gate is in harmony with the city culture. The building style of the library is really distinctive, while hard to imagine that place was the police station ever before. At present, a lot of historical rudiments are saved in the present settings, for example, through a little modification they turned the chief of police office into the reader resources retrieval center, and it makes the reader feel special. The whole library has four layers, and each layer has its own function.



Floor introduction- Public Library of Bremen

Public Library of Bremen has 64728 registered users, opening hours throughout the year are totally 14395 hours, the book circulation reach 3687125. It

has 1993963 readers, and in which of them, 1.09 million are real visitors, 900000 virtual visitors. Public Library of Bremen has organized 2149 activities throughout the past whole year. These numbers sounds huge, but more amazing thing is that the e-book lending volume reached 903938 copies.

## **A. Stock management**

### **Rich variety of collection**

The total collections of Public Library of Bremen are 548142 copies, including 381673 printed documents, 133449 AV copies, 29370 electronic documents and 3630 special type literatures. Literature content covers the multilingual documents, in addition to German, English, there are Chinese, French, Italian as well, that shows the cultural diversity. Special literature contains rich varieties, e.g. games, paintings, sculptures, photographs, manuscripts, music and other items.

### **Dynamic and flexible management**

The fiscal year of Public Library of Bremen starts from every April, usually they will discuss the budget of literature acquisition three months before. During the



acquisition review, they would consider the expert advice, bookseller's recommendation and customer demand, to optimize the selection. We even found the latest books of Hanhan, Moyan and Hema which are very popular in China on the shelf, I think it owes to the library's well-operated book selection process. In Public Library of Bremen, 50% documents on shelf are no more

than 5 years. Book off the shelf are sold to the reader by "1€Book Fair" or donate to some institutions, to maximize the usage of the literatures.

## **B. Service to readers**

### **Interesting services for children**

The Children's floor is the first stop of our visit in Public Library of Bremen, its creation and interesting design impressed us a lot. The characteristics of the service for children can totally be reflected through the design of a pirate ship, night reading camp, tents, deck chair, etc. Children's participation through the overall floor design

is the reason why it is so exciting. At the beginning of the library construction, the designer and librarian together with children discuss and review the design proposals. So there are a lot of creative designs coming from children, which truly sharpens the floor as a dreamland for Children: The pirate ship is used to simulate the reading on the sea, the night reading camp simulates reading environment just before sleep that encourages parent-child reading. These scenario-based designs are very popular among young readers, not only it caters to children's reading habits, but also facilitates the whole reading atmosphere.



Children's Floor -Public Library of Bremen

By the young readers' interest, the library also created a website "rabe-kessi.de". Launched in 2009, aimed for children, the site is specialized telling a story of the mascot crow Kathy. All information about the library and reading tips are presented in this site, via a lively and lovely way. The site is initially developed together by the library and a company, then maintained by an intern, simply by deeply loved by children. The crow dolls then became the mascot of Public Library of Bremen



"rabe-kessi.de" website



mascot - Public Library of Bremen

### Services for youth

In China, our public libraries seldom divide young readers into teen group and children group. But Public Library of Bremen particularly attach importance to young



readers group, because by data analysis, they found that this group takes 17% of the total readers, which can't be ignored. In order to provide better service for teenagers, the library has a series of special offers for them: setting animation zone, gaming space, purchasing relevant literatures on the basis of their preference analysis.

Teenage area - Public Library of Bremen

### **Multicultural services**

Bremen has many immigrants, according to 2008 population statistics, nearly 26% residents are not born in Germany. That's why Public Library of Bremen become the place of a cultural fusion and cross cultural learning. The library owns literature in 35 languages, and 22 language courses, in order to meet the Bremen citizen's interest and requirement over multicultural and multilingual. The language course project can help readers to learn a language from the beginning to advanced level, while making use of language textbooks, audio CDs, tapes. Meanwhile, the library also provides training to their staffs on that theme, such as "how to communicate with customers on different culture". This kind of training is very practical that employees are able to provide service in a more professional way, for readers in different cultural backgrounds.

### **Other services**

#### **BIBCARD**

With German ID card, passport or residence permit, after paying some fees, readers can register to have "BIBCARD". It's valid for 12 months that won't renew automatically once expires, but can be reactivated. \*To have that, teenagers under 18 years' old need the signature of their parent or guardian. Pupils, unemployed and retired, who has effective proof can take the card for free. The fee can be deducted for the library cooperator. In addition, people who have the library card of the university and research institute can also take the card for free.

By using "BIBCARD", readers can borrow all literatures and artworks for free,

except for some best-seller. The borrowing period of general literature is 3 weeks, DVD is 1 week, artwork 12 weeks, electronic documents 2 weeks. Journals and best-seller books can not be renewed, DVD can be renewed once, while other documents can renew twice. There will be €0.3 cost if readers exceed the borrowing period, but readers can pay to register the reminding service for the overdue. Readers can also make an appointment of literature by telephone, e-mail. The confirmation feedback via e-mail, charges €1/per book.

### **Art Library**

“Go with art” is service concept of Public Library of Bremen, which is full of romance and life interests. Readers can borrow artwork for decorating their house and office by “BIBCARD”. This service was originated in 1970s, and is popular among readers. The warehouse of art library is huge that there are more than 3500 pictures, photographs, manuscripts, sculpture, including many local masterpieces.

### **C. digital library**

As the digital library of Public Library of Bremen, STABI24 is published by an independent portal site with access to 18 applications. With the help of Portal technology, it realizes the functions of page aggregation application, authorized access, single sign on, etc. The links to STABI-HB, Facebook, Twitter, Youtube websites of the Public Library of Bremen can also be found on STABI24. To enjoy digital service of the library, readers need to login on STABI24 to get access authorization, and then use the digital application services through an authorize-required entrance that is provided by content providers.

The construction of service network under central-branch library system of Public Library of Bremen is based on automatic management system(AMS), which is similar to Hangzhou Public Library’s. All of the branches use the same AMS to store and manage data centrally. The only difference between them is the operating environment of AMS — Public Library of Bremen is running AMS under demilitarized zone(DMZ) of local government network which is similar to the E-government extranet or E-government cloud in Hangzhou. In this way, Public Library of Bremen is able to reduce the cost of its IT infrastructures.

### **III. Other libraries**

#### **Library of Alfred Wegener Institute**

The library of Alfred Wegener Institute(AWI) polar ocean institution is located in the famous "city of science" Bremerhaven, with 60 kilometers from Bremen. It provides services for the scientists of the institution, so 95% book funding is used for purchasing electronic journals, only 5% used for paper documents. All service is provided via self-service that there is no staffs in the library, the actions of borrowing and returning are all processed and recorded in an information form. Readers can leave a message if have any other requirement, later the staff will take the initiative to contact the reader. One special service is to provide academic level analysis for the researchers in AWI. In addition, the library also has a branch in the Antarctic providing service for the scientific researchers.



Photo with AWI staff

### **SuUB**

Bremen University Library (SuUB) is the largest and oldest academic library in Bremen City. It is not only providing literature service for the students, teachers and researchers in Bremen and Bremen Heaven, but also opens to the public(free for the local citizen).

SuUB library system is composed by a central library and several branch libraries in various departments and higher education institutions which located in or near Bremen and Bremen Heaven. At the same time, SuUB's network also provides database, e-book, electronic magazine for a large number of colleges in this city.



Ancient books in SuUB

#### **IV. Experience and further considerations**

This visit offers us a great opportunity to experience the advanced services and best practices in Germany libraries. We could have a better image about what our friends doing in library data analysis, customer management, and service optimization for local readers, which provide very good know-how for improving services in our library:

##### **1. Focus on data analysis**

Public Library of Bremen puts data statistics as an important role of library management system; they also treat it as an important tool of communicating with readers. The starting point and the foothold of all the library work is readers' requirement. Through the analysis of the reader requirement information and behavior, library work could be more specified and targeted. Compared with data analysis of Chinese library, it has features following:

They think that numbers collected should be put into correlative analysis, so that they could become parameters or indicators that truly meaningful. For example: one of the most common indicators in library business "Borrowing Volume". Before analyzing this data, the first thing is to analyze the large amounts of peripheral data, like the collection amount, the human resource cost, reader's borrowing pattern evolvement, etc., rather than simply comparing the increase and the decrease of the borrowing number itself. They think that stand-alone data only shows limited significance and limited power of persuasion. Using the correlative data to do further analysis and find the implicit association could provide more valuable services for readers.

They believe that only comprehensive and careful data analysis could provide guiding significance. They do tracking analysis on the daily records of users' personal characteristics and borrowing action. On the basis of these analysis, the library forecasts the trends of customer requirement, and even try to detect the potential demand. Then, they try to provide personalized service to customers. They analyze the data very carefully, such as analyze the borrowing volume from all angles by hours, another example is for the readers' information, the analysis is so accurate that covering change in gender among all age groups. They put the data analysis into a strategic status level and continue tracking at all time.

The most function of data analysis is to have better planning and controlling, in order to achieve the work target. Data analysis is exiting in every working process of



Public Library of Bremen, it provides the input of service optimization via various of data statistics.

## **2. Focus on customer management**

Public Library of Bremen pay great attention to customer management that put readers' satisfactory into the center of performance output. In order to improve the relationship with reader, the library introduced service standards, optimize the communication channel, increased mutual interaction chance with readers. The library regards service standard as the basis of steadying and improving relations with readers, the standard content covers a lot, not only the methods and skills of reader communication, but also involves the interaction and etiquette between librarians. They pay much attention to listening over customer, and even invite customers to participate into the development of library projects. Just like their children service design procedure, many business items of Public Library of Bremen, even the opening time, are developed on readers' demand. Besides, the complaint management is also introduced into the reader management. The library president Barbara Lison said "We are never afraid of making mistakes, what we afraid is the same mistake happens again, and what we expect is innovation could come out from the trial and error!", they treat "error is treasure" as part of the continuous improvement cycle. Our library had better also consider establishing a comprehensive, detailed and thoughtful service standard to guide our daily work.

## **3. Focus on changing**

In the information age, the library's center position of information service gradually becomes weak, and every technology evolvement wave produces a voice that "The library is dying out". The previous operation mode of traditional libraries definitely can't meet the requirement in the new rich-information environment, we really need to think how to launch a variety of new services to meet the new requirements from this rapidly changing society and also the growing customer.

How to seek development under a changing environment? The team of Public Library of Bremen already had years' successful experience.

Supporting by the Internet and IT technologies, Public Library of Bremen finds the meeting point of new technology and library business under the new challenges. They launched a variety of services which is far more than the our Chinese common libraries, such as promoting electronic library, build up the library apps over all popular client platforms like iOS, Android, Windows, eBooks. Currently, more than

one third of the borrowings is coming from the electronic literature. It actively seek and optimize the best ratio balancing the physical environment and virtual services, and takes effort to achieve the transformation from traditional library to a compound one.

It's undoubtedly that Public Library of Bremen has been walking ahead in this wave of society change. in the forefront. Our library is on the road of constructing compound library, but still we have a long way to go on either the speed or level of combining new technology with library business. By enhance the development of electronic library business, like Public Library of Bremen our library could probably find the new breakthrough point in the new area. Only continuous innovation could make us survive in the impact of new technologies.

#### **4. Focus on User Experience**

In the construction of digital Library, we may learn a lot from Bremen Library. Its portal site is brief and clear, just as digital service entrance of smart mobile phone. Users may start digital service without notice. It also provides digital service according to the needs of local residents. For example, immigrants in Bremen demand for language learning, so Bremen Library purchases online resource named TellMeMore, which provides seven languages. People can use eAusleihe to borrow e-books, which can be read on any mobile terminal. Bremen Library makes full use of local government networks and server of third-party digital service corporation. Library can get authorized access services of it from Internet. DiViBib (one of the third-party e-book purchasing platform) provides purchasing data of users for library. The library make full use of social networks, such as Facebook, Twitter and Youtube to raise awareness, as well as collect user requirements.

We gained a lot in the business visit this time, thanks very much for the funding from BI-International Foundation, and also for the consideration & arrangement during our staying. We hope to improve the study and corporation between Public Library of Bremen and our library, while our librarians could continue this kind of mutual communication and visit.