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Participation in the International Library Conference at Bielefeld Germany
& Professional working visits to libraries in
Bielefeld, Hannover, Wolfenbuttel and Berlin

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Visit and stay sponsored
By
Bibliothek and Information International (Library and Information
International) at

Bibliothek und Information Deutschland, (BID) Berlin, Germany

My visit to Germany was sponsored by the Bibliothek & Information International based in Berlin. BI-I provided grants for participating in the 9th International Bielefeld Conference and for professional visits to German libraries from February 2-14. My sincere appreciation to BI-I for giving me this opportunity. This was my first visit to Germany.

I must also give credit to Goethe Max Mueller Bhavan, New Delhi who initially informed me of the grants available through BID. Max Mueller Bhavan also forwarded my application to BID and I immediately got a response from Ms.Hella Klauser spokesperson for BI-International.

Arrangements for my home stays in Germany were finalized before leaving India. Being an alumna of the US. Experiment in Living 's School for International Training in Brattleboro, Vermont, I contacted their head office regarding the possibility of arranging home stays for me with German families in the cities I had planned to visit. EIL Executive Director in USA contacted their German counter part in Bonn. The response I received from German EIL volunteers was overwhelming.

I left India on February 2nd and arrived in Dusseldorf International airport on the same day. Upon arrival my checked baggage was missing but I was assured that the baggage would be delivered to the guest house the very same night which they promptly did. I reached Bielefeld train station on a chilly winter evening and found my way to Koplring Haus, a bed and breakfast guest house which had a friendly atmosphere and helpful staff. I woke up to a beautiful snowy morning, and I walked to the conference venue quite early.

About the Conference: The Bielefeld International Conference was organized by the University of Bielefeld and is held every two years. The Conference was held in the Convention Center in the heart of the city from February 3- 5. BI-International was prompt in paying the grant at the conference venue. It was handed over to me in cash by Ms. Susanne Riedel of the University of Bielefeld library and chairperson of Berufsverband Information Bibliothek, (BIB) .

The theme of the 2009 conference was Upgrading the eLibrary: Enhanced information services driven by technology and economics. The aim of the conference was to provide information on current developments in the field of electronic information and to develop strategies for upgrading eLibraries in order to meet the demands of eScience and eLearning. There were around 303 delegates at the conference including 37 exhibitors. I was the only participant from India.

The Conference commenced on February 3rd afternoon with the welcome address by Mr. Friedrich Bode, Ministry for Innovation, Science, Research and Technology of the German State of North Rhine- Westphalia and Dr. Michael Hoppner, Director of Bielefeld University Library. The conference presentations were held in English with simultaneous translation in German. I attended most of the lectures, presentations and product demonstration by the exhibitors. The conference reception was held on February 3rd evening and the Mayor of Bielefeld, Mr. Eberhard David welcomed the delegates along with Mr. Dieter Timmermann, Rector of Bielefeld University. The Conference dinner at the Movenpick Hotel held on February 4th night was well organized.

The key note presentation on February 5th "Global libraries challenges: eLibraries on the agenda" by Dr. Claudia Lux , President of IFLA was informative and gave an overview of the current situation. I had the opportunity to exchange a few words with Dr. Lux at the conference about her most recent visit to India. I also ran into a few delegates from the IATUL conference 2006 which was held in Porto, Portugal.

The main themes and sub themes were relevant and the topics covered most of my areas of interest. A recurrent theme was the impact of economics in the current information environment. The transition to eLearning is occurring at a rapid pace and librarians are deeply involved in figuring out how to shape eLearning options with new technology and limited resources. The conference outlined the future of eLibraries, presented ideas from library administrators for improving library services using advanced technology and ways to manage financial resources prudently. The themes were apt for the current times with the ever changing technology and grim economy. The experience of developing and maintaining a digital library system and providing access to digital information services and electronic resources in European and U.S. libraries were the focus. The urgent need of the hour was for close collaboration between librarians and scholar. One way for containing the cost was for libraries to cooperate, share the resources and provide open access. Mass digitization of British library manuscripts, challenges faced in resource integration and providing online access were also highlighted. The technical papers on the development of knowledge portal, virtual libraries, cyber

infrastructure and related areas gave practical and useful information. The efforts and contribution made by various libraries in this area was presented. The conference fulfilled my purpose in participating which was to learn more about the trends in digitization, preservation of library materials and development of eLibraries in Europe and globally. The conference proceedings and the photos are available in the conference website.

Ideally the conference could have included a half a day's study tour of some unique place in Bielefeld or its vicinity and ending with a cultural event. This would have been an interesting diversion and another way for participants to interact in an informal way.

Bielefeld University Library: I joined the group of participants on a quick tour of the university library in the afternoon led by the library staff. Our group was truly international consisting of Russians, Polish, Japanese, Indian, Swiss and German. One thing which aroused our curiosity in the library was the exhibition of valuable books which were secured by chains.

Bielefeld university library is involved with various projects one of which is the development of digital library services. A noteworthy innovation is the popular BASE or the Bielefeld Academic Search Engine tool developed for accessing digital or electronic resources. The library's website can be accessed from 150 workstations in the library, from 5000 workplaces in the university and externally through the World Wide Web. All resources of the library website including the digital library are open for public use with some restrictions.

I left Bielefeld for Hannover around 4.p.m. I was met by my German host family at the train station and I stayed with them from February 5th evening to 8th morning.

Visit to TIB-Hannover February 6th

I reported to the main university library of Technische Informationsbibliothek (TIB) Hannover around 9.15 am. The program for my visit was already mailed to me. The visit was organized meticulously. The Library Director Dr.Uwe Rosemann welcomed me in his office and gave a brief introduction to the university, the libraries, strategies, current status and the future plans. I was introduced to Mrs. Christiane Bublies, Project Manager of GoPortis who gave a presentation on GoPortis which consists of three subject libraries- the German library of Science and Technology (Hannover), German library of Medicine (Cologne/Bonn) and German library of Economics (Kiel/Hamburg). These three libraries have collaborated to provide German document delivery services more efficiently through one single service. She provided a sample pack on GoPortis and forwarded the slides of her presentation. Their website is www.goportis.de/. She also invited me to participate in the forthcoming Inter lending Conference organized by Goportis /University of Hannover Library in October 2009.

Mrs. Anne Barchow gave a presentation on another TIB project Vascoda- the Internet Portal of German Scientific Information. This portal provides information for anyone looking for scientific and scholarly information. Besides it offers user-friendly access to reliable information and full texts from a wide range of subject areas. It is based on a system of virtual subject libraries of business, economics

and technology. It also provides additional service and content which is not included in Vascoda. She gave more information on Vascoda along with some samples. Later on she forwarded the slides of her presentation. Following this session, Mr. Bernard Tempel, the Subject Specialist for Mathematics and Computer science gave a guided tour of the university library and several facilities including the stack area and collections. He gave detailed explanation of the libraries systems, operations and services. I was invited for lunch with Mr. Tempel and Mrs. Barchow.

In the afternoon Mrs. Christine Haseman the Head of Acquisitions & Collection Development gave an overview of the acquisitions procedure and digitization program. Dr. Gundela Lemke, Professor and head of the architecture division gave an interesting and informative presentation on digitization and preservation in her office. Mrs. Lemke provided samples of the digital prints from the Haupt collection and architectural collection.

The German National Library of Science and Technology (TIB) is considered to be the world's largest library of science and technology and one of the most reliable suppliers of documents within its fields of specialization. TIB specializes in all areas of technology and their related sciences, in particular chemistry, information technology, mathematics.

TIB has an excellent stock of around 6 million items, as well as 18,000 current journals. TIB is constantly increasing its collection of electronic publications and expanding its digital library.

Their website is <http://www.tib.uni-hannover.de/en/>

I was unable to schedule any library visits on Feb. 7th because it was Saturday and a holiday. My host family took me on a tour of the city of Hannover. My second host family joined us at the Hannover Town Hall and took me to some historical places and for dinner.

On Sunday Feb. 8th morning I left for Braunschweig to visit the Herzog August Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel. My original plan was to visit the Technical University of Braunschweig on February 11th but that was cancelled because it was not convenient for the library staff. The Herzog August Library was brought to my attention by German EIL volunteers as a must see library for any librarian, writer or researcher because of its unique collection, services and arrangement. The EIL volunteer from Braunschweig offered to take me to this library as it was open on Sundays and she was very familiar with the library. So she met me at the Braunschweig train station and we drove straight to the library.

Herzog August Bibliothek , February 8: This library has been open to the public since 1666 and ever since its founding it has been the location of research and intellectual activity. Researchers from all over the world come to Wolfenbüttel to use the rich holdings and profit from the excellent working conditions. The library is named after Duke August and the core of the library collection belongs to him. Many of the books assembled here were dedicated and presented to him by their authors. The library continues to add rare and scholarly books. Famous figures

such as the philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz and the German dramatist Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, served as librarians here.



This is a fantastic place to visit and do research. It serves both as a public library and research library. This library has the look of a traditional library but once you enter you see the blending of the old and the new technology. The arrangement of the books on the shelves is also unusual but all the shelves are accessible through spiral stairways. It seemed so practical and it saved so much of space. Digitization, preservation and online access are also available for the rare book collections. The user can gain access to digital resources in the libraries and archives from all around the world. They have a strong conservation and preservation programme. In recent years the library has welcomed 150 researchers annually who have used the collections from several weeks to a whole year. Many of these scholars are funded by various library fellowships programs which have been established over the years. Photography with flash was not permitted in the library. The security of the collections appears to be their priority and the collections are well guarded. It is also a cultural centre where events and exhibitions are held routinely. I also visited the Lessing Haus and museum adjacent to the library. Their website is www.hab.de

On Feb. 8th afternoon I traveled to Berlin and stayed with my host family in North Berlin from Feb. 8 -13. I was met by an EIL volunteer at the Central train station in Berlin who accompanied me to North Berlin. It was snowing quite heavily but I managed to cope with the cold weather and the snowy conditions.

Central and Regional Library of Berlin (Zentral- und Landesbibliothek) Feb. 9th: My appointment was at 11 a.m. and I was received by Prof. Dr. Micheal Durr from the publications and digitization department at the imposing Berliner Stadtbibliothek. I was given a detailed tour of the library including the reading room, stack areas and reference section. Besides he gave orientation to the digitization projects and showed the equipments used for digitizing documents. I also visited the e-LearnBar

in a modern building with several computers where courses in computer instruction and Internet use are offered to various groups especially for adults and senior citizens.

The Central and Regional Library in Berlin is Germany's largest central library, with more than 3.3 million electronic and printed media. The holdings include books, CD-ROMS, Videos, DVDS, graphics, audio books, artifacts etc. Its collection reflects its diverse clientele. Foreign-language literature, international newspapers, magazines and language courses are also available. It serves the scholarly community and functions as an academic or research library. It also serves as a public library and caters to the needs of all Berliners, from children to senior citizens. I was intrigued by the exhibition of old books in the lobby. I understood that the books were taken away during the war from the Jewish families. Now efforts are on to locate the owners to return the books. My visit to this library ended by afternoon and I went to explore the historic area of Berlin.

On Feb. 10th, I had an appointment at the Free University of Berlin library. The deputy librarian Mr. Jiri Kende received me in his office. He briefed me about the functioning of the main university library and the department libraries. He introduced me to different sections of the main university library and explained to me their activities. One thing I observed was the card catalogue which is still retained because of on going work in digitization. This alphabetical catalog is indispensable because it contains data for the print publications held by the university library and the department libraries prior to 1989. The users also find it convenient to refer to the card catalog. The Digital library of Frei University of Berlin is a central gateway for searching eResources. The Institutional Repository which contains the faculty publications, thesis and dissertations etc is an important resource.

It was snowing and sleeting and there so was much slush around it was not pleasant to walk. Mr. Kende was thoughtful enough to take me in his car and show me the campus and drive me to the new Philological Library. This library which is in shape of brain or space ship is the most visited library in the campus and needless to say it is an architectural wonder. Ms. Monicke Diecks who was in charge of the library took me on a detailed tour of the library. This is indeed a marvelous place conducive for serious study. It is like a maze, yet well planned, keeping the needs of the user in mind. The library observes pin drop silence. I understand that this library is popular among the students.

As for its collection a total of 700,000 books are housed in the new Philological library, which has a useable floor space of 6,500 square meters. The library has 650 seats, including 100 research stations, each with its own terminal with Internet access. I was interested in the Book-Eye copying service and Ms. Diecks gave a demonstration. This company was present at the Bielefeld conference so here again I was able to observe their service in actual library setting. She provided some additional information about the library including picture postcards. By late afternoon I left the Philological library. My professional visits to German libraries concluded with the Frei University of Berlin.



February 11th was a free day and I visited the museums and the surrounding areas.

On February 12th morning I paid a courtesy visit to Ms. Hella Klauser and Shirley McLeod at the BI-I office in Berlin.

I couldn't leave Berlin or Germany without meeting Ms. Klauser in person because she took a very active role in making my visit possible. Ms. Klauser was gracious enough to meet me inspite of her busy schedule. Actually she had invited me for lunch on February 13th which was not convenient for me.

I left Berlin on February 13th morning for Dusseldorf but I stopped again at Hannover on the invitation of EIL family and spent the night with them as my flight was leaving the next day only. It was snowing and sleeting so I relaxed in their home learning about both the cultures. We met as strangers and left as friends and we are keeping in touch.

I took the train for Dusseldorf airport on February 14 and left for Dubai the same night. I spent a day in Dubai and reached Trivandrum, India on February 16th.

Outcome of the visit: The Bielefeld conference followed by professional visits to German libraries was practical, useful and interesting because I was able to understand what was going on in German libraries after listening to various presentations. Overall my trip to Germany was fruitful, impressive and exciting. I returned to India with wonderful ideas for forging new ties with German libraries and implementing changes in my existing environment. It has given further impetus to visit more libraries in Germany. It broadened my network of contacts particularly in Europe. The purpose of my visit was accomplished which was to see e-library centers, infrastructure, e-learning methods, digitization techniques and preservation practices. I was able observe all these in the four libraries I visited. I was very impressed with the innovations, technology, infrastructure, the user focus of the libraries and quality of the library services.

Even though we are in the digital era and we can access library collections through websites and have virtual tour of libraries in the 21st century it is more stimulating and worthwhile to visit libraries in person and interact with staff members on a personal level.

On a general note I commend the excellent public transportation system in Germany, its punctuality and efficiency. I was impressed with the friendliness and hospitality of the people I came across in Germany. All in all it was a wonderful experience in spite of the cold weather.

Since returning home I have already set up an exhibition in my library on German libraries, its services and facilities for the benefit of our students, the staff and faculty. This is to make them aware of the trends in German libraries. I also received posters and additional information from my host families in Hannover and the Herzog August Library in Wollenbutel both in English and German. Besides I have also put up posters on information about GoPortis and Vascoda services. By the end of June I plan to start an e-Library center in our library.

Suggestions:

1. It would be helpful if the BII grant covered the arrival day for the conference including all days for the professional visit to the libraries and the intervening days. For example Saturdays and Sundays were not covered by the grant although the next appointment for the library visit was on Monday.
2. Air lines book economy ticket for certain dates and one must travel on the days the ticket is available. So arriving the previous day of the conference was unavoidable. However it is essential to arrive the previous day in order to avoid delays and to get settled.

Once again I thank BI-International and providing me with this opportunity.

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