

Report for the Grant offered for the Study trip to Germany

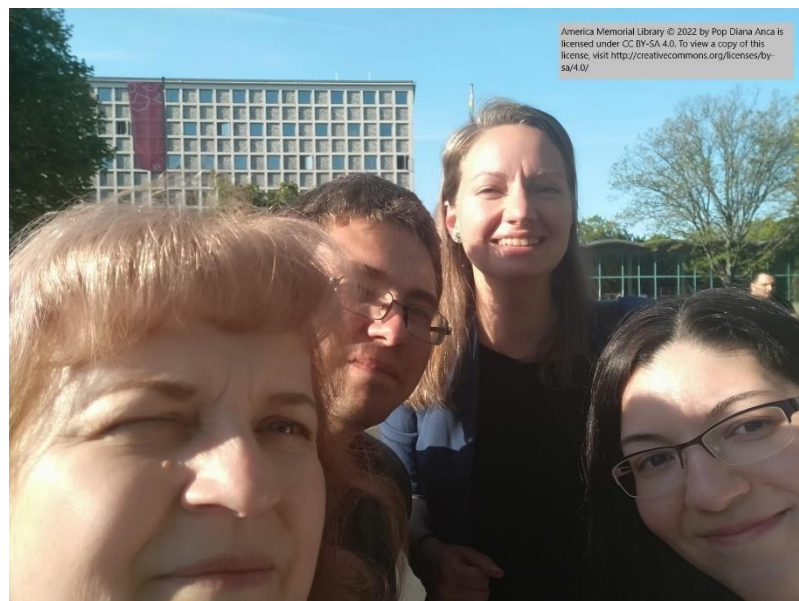
by Egan Ioana, Pop Diana, Suciu Marian and Vidruțiu Cristina

From 9th to 13th May 2022, our group of four librarians from “Octavian Goga” Cluj County Library – made up by Egan Ioana, Reading Room librarian, Pop Diana and Vidruțiu Cristina, Children’s Department librarians, and Marian Suciu, librarian at the “Traian Brad” Branch - visited three important libraries in Germany. These were the Berlin Central and Regional Library (Zentral- und Landesbibliothek Berlin), Potsdam City and Regional Library (Stadt- und Landersbibliothek Postdam) and Dresden City Library (Städtische Bibliotheken Dresden).

On May 9th, we began our study trip to Germany with a stop at the America Memorial Library (Amerika-Gedenkbibliothek) of the Berlin Central and Regional Library. The building was built with financial support from the United States of America after World War II and opened on 17th September 1954. For the first part of our visit, we were offered a wonderful introduction of the activities held by the Children and Youth Department - found out that the staff help children with completing their homework and research projects. Furthermore, the department offers children programs on MINT by combining lecture with experimentation, workshops on coding and robotics, Manga drawing sessions, various cultural events, a reading battle in spring, a reading program for infants, and a summer vacation program.

After the presentation of the Children and Youth Department, we were offered a guided tour of the America Memorial Library. While on this tour, our group was impressed by the self-return machine, because unlike our drop-box - which only recognizes the book and changes the status of the book in the system from borrowed by the user to returned – the self-return machine at the Berlin Central and Regional Library changes the status of the book, but also sorts the returned book according to the department where it belongs and is send by a conveyor belt to the book basket of the appropriate department. Our group was also very appreciative of the large space made available to those who want to read magazines and newspapers, and of the cozy furniture in the location: armchairs and sofas. We also discovered that the library lends out not only audio-video documents and books, but also local paintings or original sculptures, a service which we perceive

as innovative and very beneficial for the users, but very expensive for the library, as the institution must invest a considerable amount of money in buying art. We also took part in the closing event of The Europe Challenge, during which we learned about the projects developed by the Berlin Central and Regional Library, such as the Mehrblick project that created the critical glasses for the younger readers who read Queer literature, the Fugitives Archives-Project that offered a voice to the queer immigrant community, and Transcodiert magazine project that enables queer literature to be published and advertised. During this event we also learnt about the initiatives of Amsterdam Public Libraries OBA (Netherlands), DOKK1 Aarhus Public Library (Denmark), De Krook Ghent, (Belgium), Kranj City Library (Slovenia), Jordi Rubio i Balaguer Library (Spain) and Valmiera Public Library (Latvia).



On the second day, we visited the Potsdam City and Regional Library. After a warm greeting, we started began with a session of presentations. During this session, the director presented the way in which the public libraries from Germany function and important aspects of the Potsdam City and Regional Library. Afterwards, Marian Suciuc presented the way in which Romanian libraries are organized, the services and activities offered by the “Octavian Goga” Cluj County Library and the “Traian Brad” Branch. Later on, our group was invited on a guided library tour, during which we learnt about the impressive “Library of Things”, the Youth department that houses a high-quality collection of manga, and the Children department with the book furniture wherein children can hide and read. During the last part of our visit, we were told about the

activities offered to children and young adults by one of the librarians from the Children Department, and Cristina Vidruțiu presented the activities of the Children Department of the “Octavian Goga” Cluj County Library.



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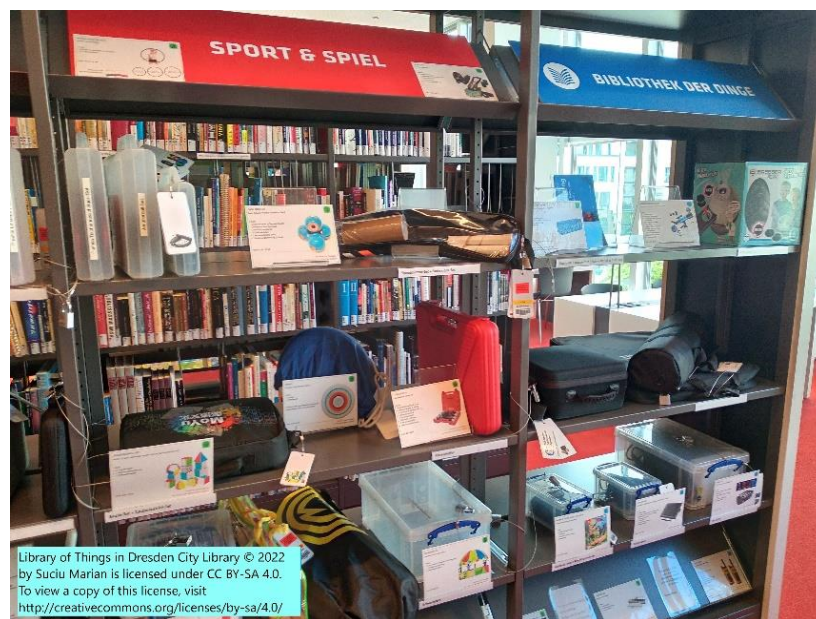
We made a visit to the Berlin City Library (Berliner Stadtbibliothek) of the Berlin Central and Regional Library. Firstly, our group was offered a tour of the building, during which we learnt that this particular library space offers a lot of reading spaces and that most of the collection is stored in a huge deposit. Afterwards, Lea Hartung explained the manner in which the librarians tried to attract the community to come to library, not only by creating special programs for them, but by offering the necessary spaces where the public could interact and socialize. We were made aware of the service compass, in which the core values of the library are represented through comic strips.



In Dresden, we visited the Gorbitz Branch of the Dresden City Library, a small but modern branch, which serves 17 kindergartens and 7 schools. Our small group learned about the various activities developed in this branch, such as musical events, puppet shows, cultural evenings during which authors of children's book come and talk about their books or about the way in which a book is created. The librarians offered us a tour of the space, during which we learnt that the staff use different color stickers in order to distinguish the books meant for small children, children over 10 years, and teenagers. Moreover, we were impressed by the fact that the librarians regularly obtain reviews of new books through the *Lektoratskooperation* program and select the books based on these reviews.



The next day, after visiting the Gorbitz Branch, our group visited the main headquarters of the Dresden City Library, situated in the Palace of Culture (Kulturpalast Dresden). In the beginning, our group was offered a tour of the building, during which we observed “the Library of Things”, the way in which they were living with nature (as outside the Children Department there were some beehives), and the cozy area dedicated to teenagers (where you could find comics, manga and age-appropriate literature, and board games). Afterwards, presentations on the activity of the librarians at the main headquarters were held for us. Thus, we learned about the various activities of the main headquarters of the library, such as workshops of coding, robotics, or board games, *Lesestrak!* Project (“Strong Readers!”) through which children are encouraged to discover the benefits of reading, comics and manga drawing courses, anime nights, and so on.



After this experience, each of the four librarians in our group returned to Romania with considerable more experience and a multitude of positive opinions. Ioana Egan affirms that “I have learned that dedication and passion for your work, kindness and creativity can bring people towards knowledge, information, [and] a better life”. Cristina Vidruțiu believes that “our group was very lucky to be able to see great libraries, but also to get in contact with a group of dedicated and open-minded librarians from Germany that were professional and kind enough to gently introduce us to the German perspective on Library and Information Services and, afterwards, were open and very constructive in engaging with our group in creative discussions on the role and

future of libraries”. Diana Pop asserts that “during our visit, we also had a glimpse of the various activities offered to the library users, from children to adults, and we found out that, despite the distance and our different historical backgrounds, we all share the love of books and are willing to support the members of our communities to continuously develop their competencies and build connections through the culture of reading”. Finally, Marian Suciuc thinks that “this experience was inspiring not only for us, but through our presentations, we believe that we managed to offer our German librarian colleagues new ideas for children and teenagers’ programs”.

In conclusion, we want to express our gratitude for the generous grant offered by Bibliothek & Information International, which enabled us to visit five important library locations in three different cities. Without this grant we would have not been able to complete this study trip and learn so much about the various activities that our German colleagues prepare for their community, while also becoming inspired by the innovative spaces we have experienced, such as the space for youngsters in the Dresden City Library, the diverse “Library of Things” in the Potsdam City and Regional Library and the Press room in the America Memorial Library.