

A PROFESSIONAL LIBRARIAN'S VISIT TO LIBRARIES IN GERMANY, JANUARY 2023

by Albert Kweku Bening

This is a report on a professional visit to selected libraries in Germany, from 3 to 20 January 2023. I hereby express my sincere appreciation to the Goethe Institute and BI-International (BII) for arranging this program for librarians and staff. I wish to thank also BID e.V. (Library & Information Germany) for their programs and sponsorship, through which I was selected from Ghana as the Professional Librarian in Residence for the year 2023.

As a result of this visit, I was able to establish new professional contacts and gained a wealth of knowledge and experience. I now have some deeper insight into the wide impact and changes that libraries are making for the benefit of their communities and patrons.

Preparation for the trip

As a self-motivated professional, and in pursuit of current knowledge, I came across this program in my search for new personal development for the year 2023. Through extensive search, I found information about BI-International and its programs and professional visits.

I contacted about 15 libraries in Germany and received responses from only 4 libraries.

My special appreciation to Dr Carolin Dunkel, Mr Hossam Zalabany, Dr Anne Schumann Douosson and Saskia Kussin for hosting me in their libraries. It was great to meet and know these professionals who have acquired deep knowledge about new developments in the library profession. Dr Carolin was my main contact person in Germany and helped me to arrange visits to other libraries. However, due to circumstances beyond our control, we had to cancel some potential visits and arrange for only one visit.

I wish to express appreciation to the staff of Jugendbildungsstätte Sonnenau, where I lived in Vallendar, Koblenz. I had a great time in their beautiful valley, mountainous sightseeing, and peaceful rest in their accommodation. I booked my accommodation before arrival and I never regretted staying there.

Libraries Visited

Though Ibero-Amerikanisches Institut - Preußischer Kulturbesitz Institut asked me to come, I had to postpone that for another time since I had only a limited period at my disposal. In total, I visited 3 Libraries in Germany and they are;

- Knowledge and Research Service (KRS) WHU – Otto Beisheim School of Management
- Goethe University Library of African Studies in Frankfurt
- Stadtbibliothek Berlin-Mitte

Librarian in Residence

KRS WHU – Otto Beisheim School of Management



WHU – Otto Beisheim School of Management is an international business university with many academic programs in English and is located in a quiet and serene environment with many tourist sites and other activities in the Koblenz (Vallender) Region. The institution also has another campus at Dusseldorf.

My main Librarian in Residence was at the library of WHU – Otto Beisheim School of Management in Vallendar,

now with a new library name, that is, Knowledge and Research Service (KRS). The new name came as a result of a broader, in-depth research service in the knowledge of research services that the department is doing and working with users, members and publishers in WHU – Otto Beisheim School of Management Institute both campuses in Vallendar and Dusseldorf.

The purpose of this trip was to gain a better understanding of library operations and services in Europe, with a particular focus on best practices in the management of academic libraries.

On arrival at the library, I was given a warm welcome by the library staff, who gave me a comprehensive tour of the facility. I was impressed by the state-of-the-art technology and innovative approaches that the library had adopted to provide the highest level of service to its patrons.

One of the highlights of the trip was a meeting with the library directors at WHU – Otto Beisheim School of Management. They shared their insights and expertise on library management and operations. I was particularly impressed by the director's focus on patron service and the use of technology to improve the library experience. He also learned about the various programs and initiatives that the library has implemented to support research and teaching at WHU – Otto Beisheim School of Management.



WHU- Library Database is a one-stop for their patrons to use their resources. It is even easier if a patron has the database guide because it is well explained. These resources help students and researchers to get information and other software tools to use as far as they are members of the WHU – Otto Beisheim School of Management community.

The database of WHU Library is at the fingertips of users and some of these resources are:

- **Financial & Economics** - OECD, IMF (IWF) eLibrary, World Bank eLibrary, WTO iLibrary, Blockholders, EIKON, CRSP, OTC Markets etc.
- **Statistics & Country Reports** - Statista and EIU Country Report
- **Bibliometrics** - Scopus
- **Interdisciplinary Sources** - JSTOR-Journal Archive (Business, Economics, Finance) and CrossAsia
- **Business** - ABI/INFORM Global, EBSCO Business Source Complete, Springer Links, WISO, ScienceDirect, Emerald Management 120, Sustainable Organisation Library etc.
- **Market Research** - Passport, IBIS World
- **Company Data** - Amadeus, BoardEX, Compustat - ExecuComp, Compustat - Global, SDC Platinum
- **Legal Information** - Beck Online and Nexis Uni (LexisNexis)

Interlibrary Loan and reference management software tools like Endnote and Citavi are also available for the users of the community (WHU).

I had the privilege of using all these software and many more. In addition, I was allowed to participate in a German learning class but due to my tight schedule in the library, I was unable to participate fully. I am grateful to the WHU – Otto Beisheim School of Management for this opportunity. During our knowledge exchange sessions in librarianship and software applications, I was introduced to KOHA library, Folio, and RDA applications, which led us to other areas such as metadata management, and library license agreement.

Three weeks of studying and exchanging knowledge with my colleague librarians was a beautiful experience for me and an eye-opener to multiple possibilities in the profession.

GOETHE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY OF AFRICAN STUDIES IN FRANKFURT



The Frankfurt Goethe University Library is home to a rich and diverse collection of African Studies materials, covering a wide range of topics, including history, literature, politics, economics, and more. The collection is widely regarded as one of the finest in Europe and is an invaluable resource for scholars and researchers interested in the African continent.

The collection includes many materials, including books, journals, maps, photographs, and other visual materials.

The library has also made extensive use of digital technology to preserve and promote its African Studies collections, making them accessible to researchers and students around the world.

A unique feature of the African Studies collection at Frankfurt Goethe University is its focus on the preservation of rare and unique materials. The library has made significant investments in state-of-the-art preservation techniques and technologies to ensure that these valuable resources are protected for future generations.

In addition to its collections, the library also hosts a range of events and programs to promote the study of African Studies, including seminars, workshops, and public lectures. These events bring together scholars and researchers worldwide to share their

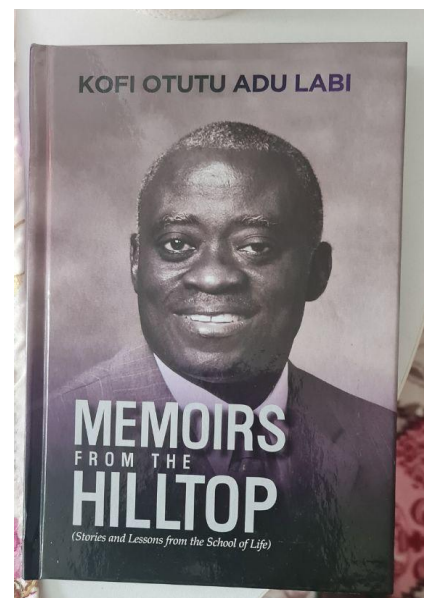
knowledge and insights on the African continent and provide a valuable platform for discussion and collaboration.

I had a one-day visit on 17th January 2023 to Frankfurt Goethe University Library but my focus was on the African Studies collection. The library specializes in all Sub-Saharan African countries. This is because another library in Germany is also undertaking a project collection covering Middle East and North African countries. The reason for this separation was based on language and history. In a way, it helps the library not to spend so much or duplicate the collections of the same African Studies Library project materials.

As part of my professional assignments in Ghana, I organize events such as book fairs, author day, and college fairs for library users. This gave me knowledge and information about publishers, authors' lives and the new trends in the academic fields. Through this, I came in contact with some authors, and I saw some of their publications in the collections of the African Studies Library. Interestingly, I sent those authors personal messages to inform them how far their publications have reached in Germany. The picture of the book is one of such authors who I personally know from Ghana and his book was acquired by the African Studies Library in Frankfurt, Germany.

My host at the African Studies Library, Dr Anne Schumann Douosson, is a knowledgeable librarian who pleasantly surprised me with her deep knowledge of African affairs. My meeting her was like meeting a professor in the University of Ghana's Information Studies Department. Though it was our first time meeting, it seemed as if we were well acquainted previously.

In 2016 the African Studies Library started a Multilanguage collection of publications from Africa. This is due to the other publications they get from countries that had very useful and important information from it.



Besides this, in the year 2020, the library launched a new online portal and the link for the website is <https://africanstudieslibrary.org/en/>. The African Studies Library project aims to build a state-of-the-art library catalogue and to provide research services for African Studies in Germany and beyond. Some data licenses that can be used on their website are African Books Collective, African Writers' Series, Apartheid: Global Perspectives 1946-1996, Corpus de la première littérature francophone de l'Afrique noire and Sabinet just to name a few.

Also, the bulk of the budget is used to purchase both local or diaspora publications in Africa with partnership from the booksellers, LC Nairobi, Sabinet, Ghana Bureau of Ghana Languages and African Book Collections. In addition, there are more sources the library also uses in its book acquisition collection such as Visit / Trip to book fairs or publication events hosted in Africa. At the time of my visit, Dr Anne Schumann Douosson had just returned from the International Book Fair in Ghana in 2022 and got a vast amount of some of the collections which we went through together.

An Africa-based publication must publish these acquired materials, they must be in the Social Science and Humanity field and the librarian ensures that only current research publications are acquired with no duplication of any book.

In terms of cataloguing the collections, it was interesting to note that RDA and FOLIO were also being used at Goethe University Library Frankfurt just like Knowledge and Research Service (KRS) WHU – Otto Beisheim School of Management where I learnt these.

Besides, based on what I witnessed and the work done so far, I would like to thank the German Research Foundation (DFG) for the continued funding of this project and also the Goethe University Library in Frankfurt for hosting the African Studies Collections.

Stadtbibliothek Berlin-Mitte

My third and final visit was on 23- 24 January 2023. I had already exchanged emails with Ms Saskia Kussin who is responsible for interns and my professional visit.



Since I had visited two libraries previously, I presumed that I was going to spend two days in a single library. But that was not the case as I got the program for my visit, it had four libraries there. That was good to know because I met more colleagues and saw more libraries and the other side of the beautiful city of Berlin.

There are a total of 82 libraries in Berlin and Berlin-Mitte has 12 of those libraries under its district. While the rest are in different districts. These libraries are all public libraries and the district government funds these libraries although a member of the public pays 10.00 euros annually for membership in the Berlin libraries. This means that all libraries in Berlin can serve any registered member who would like to borrow any materials. Also, it cost 1 euro to transport a loan item from a different library location to the members' preferred pick-up library point. Also, members get access to films/movies not just physical ones like CDs in the libraries but patrons can watch them online as well. All libraries in Berlin- Mitte offers almost all of these services to their patrons like E-books, E-magazines, PC workstations with internet access, and a loan of laptops for use with the library WIFI, printers, scanners and copiers.

Philipp-Schaeffer-Bibliothek

I met Ms Saskia Kussin on Monday 23rd January 2023 who introduced me to Anja Seifert for the library tour at Philipp-Schaeffer-Bibliothek. We had a nice tour as we kept meeting more colleagues and librarians at the circulation section, children's section, the makers' room and reading rooms.

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Schiller-Bibliothek

At the second library, Ms Saskia Kussin introduced me to Maximilian Keuenhof's tour through the library and Makerspace. The maker space was very fascinating to me as



the equipment there is used by the public, especially teenagers for free and with nice conference space for meetings too. Some of the types of equipment are 3D printers, laser cutters, cameras and sewing machines. There were also some artworks by the youth like printed T-shirts and mugs. This library is a newly constructed one compared to the rest in Stadtbibliothek Berlin-Mitte. The bicycle innovation took me much excitement knowing that patrons of the library can rent it for free and return it on the approved date.





Photo: Makers' space room

Bibliothek am Luisenbad



My second visit was on Tuesday 24 January 2023 at the Bibliothek am Luisenbad in the Pankow area. During my visit to Bibliothek am Luisenbad, I could not see the only Maker Mobile with Mr Günther Baumgarn, since he was engaged at the time.

Bruno-Lösche-Bibliothek



At Berlin-Mitte, I was taken on a tour of the library as their library has a section for Crime or investigative materials in the form of books and videos. They have over 700 media related to the topic of crime. I was told this section was the library's highly used or borrowed section. Sometimes the library invites authors of these books to come and interact personally with patrons in the library. In such events, the patrons can buy the author's books and have them autographed by the author.

I got another introduction to German cataloguing and acquisition of materials from their cataloguer called Ms Ina Löbe. We further went to see the only outdoor library van. I understand that this is most effective during summer as the van is moved to various communities and schools across Berlin Mitte.

This Mobile library can be compared with what we have in Ghana called the Extension Library of a van with library materials in it. This van is not limited to only the capital but goes beyond the regions of the capital. It is also used as a means to identify majors in educational information to students and communities in Ghana.

In addition to the professional components of the trip, I also had the opportunity to explore the local area and experience German culture through food, music and shopping. I visited the city of Koblenz and was not able to attend a traditional German festival, due to the schedule of my stay. Nevertheless, my stay in Vallendar provided a unique cultural experience and helped deepen my understanding of the country and its people.





Throughout my trip, I kept a detailed record of these observations and insights, which I intend to use to improve the operations and services of the library in Ghana.

I am already implementing several best practices I learnt during my librarian-in-residence stay at the library of WHU – Otto Beisheim School of Management, and I am confident that these changes will result in a better user experience for the patrons of my library. Yes, I have already talked to many colleague librarians in other institutions about my visit and the knowledge I have received from this trip. I came home with a deeper understanding of library

operations and services in library services in Europe, as well as a better appreciation of German public libraries. The Ghanaian public library will benefit significantly from the knowledge and experience that I have gained on this trip, and I look forward to the positive impact that it will have on the operations of my library in Ghana.

In conclusion, the African Studies collections at the Frankfurt Goethe University Library are an invaluable resource for scholars, researchers, and students, and provide a wealth of information and inspiration on the African continent. The library's commitment to preserving and promoting these collections ensures that they will remain accessible and relevant for generations to come.