

Report for the Grant offered for the Study trip to Germany in 2023

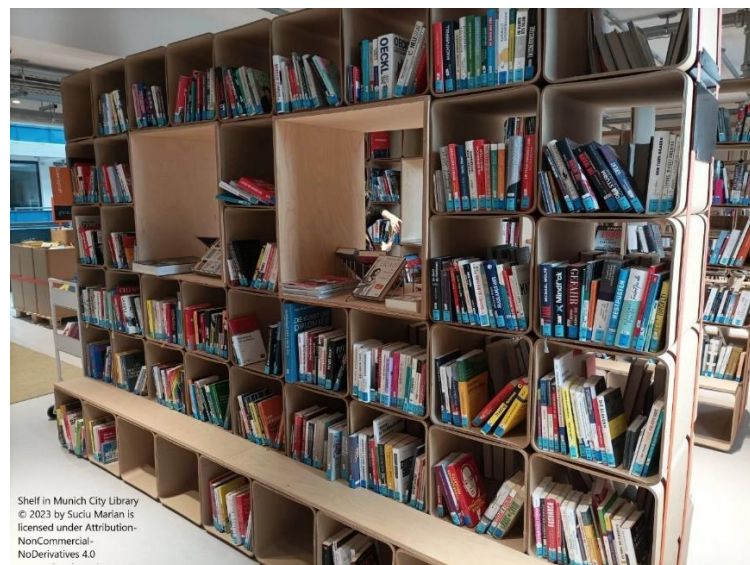
by Suciu Marian

From 8th to 12th May 2023, a group made up of four librarians from the “Octavian Goga” Cluj County Library (Baciu Laura Diana, Oprea Petrișor Ioana, Pop Ioana Terezia and Suciu Marian), 2 members of staff from the “Ioniță Scipione Bădescu” County Library (manager Marian Mariana Lucia and librarian Hosu Simona), and two from the Mureș County Library (chief librarian Precup Mătieș Ancuța Maria and librarian Illyes Claudia Carolina) visited six important libraries in Germany. These were the Munich City Library (Stadtbibliothek Münchner), the Ulm City Library (Stadtbibliothek Ulm), the Public Library in Neu Ulm (Stadtbücherei Neu-Ulm), the Stuttgart City Library (Stadtbibliothek Stuttgart), the Public Library in Frankfurt (Stadtbücherei Frankfurt) and the German National Library in Frankfurt am Main.

On May 8th, we began our study visit to Germany with a stop at the Stadtbibliothek Giesing branch, part of Munich City Library, where we were first offered a tour of the library. Afterwards, the way in which the borrowing system functions in the Munich City Library was explained to us. We were impressed by the way in which library users could borrow books from another branch at their neighborhood library. Furthermore, we were also introduced to a plant exchange program during which people could bring plants from their own home and exchange them with the flowers provided by the library and municipality.



In the afternoon of May 8th, we went to Stadtbibliothek im HP8, which is one of the three locations where the books and employees of the Central Library of the Munich City Library had to move, due to reconstruction work on the headquarters. Stadtbibliothek im HP8 functions in an old industrial building, where the librarians decided to focus on music, language and lifelong learning. Therefore, there was an extensive collection of documents on music, foreign languages and on the development of various skills and creativity. The documents were displayed on shelves made from hard cardboard, which were a perfect choice for this industrial building. As one of their areas of interest was music, the library organized a recording room, in which musicians or bands in their early stages could come and work on their songs. Furthermore, as another focus of the library is lifelong learning, there are numerous study areas available to the public. The library staff also encouraged the formation and development of language clubs.



The next day, the group went to the new building of the Ulm City Library, inaugurated in 2004. During the introduction in the services provided in the “glass pyramid” library, the group found out that there is both a borrowing system for physical documents and access to databases where users can find numerous documents, such as the Tigerbooks, containing over 3,000 electronic books and audio books, and the Genios Presseportal, where users can consult over 1,100 newspapers and magazines. Also, the library provides access to an eLearning platform with more than 1,700 electronic learning courses and to the Sprachkurse von Rosetta Stone, which offers access to numerous language courses. Moreover, we have also discovered a very well-equipped Maker Space with digital equipment, Arduino kit, NAO robot, 3D printers, Lasercutter and sewing machines.

Furthermore, the librarians explained that, in order for the users to have access to the Maker Space, they have to have a library card and participate in an introductory workshop on how to use the various instruments in the room. Afterwards, we went to the Public Library in Neu Ulm which functions temporarily in a university building, as the new headquarters are being built. Although it is a small library, the children's and teenagers' sections have a rich book fund, a digital elephant that reads the books out loud, and a special room where children with speaking difficulties can read books to a specially trained librarian-dog.



In the morning of May 10th, our group visited the Central Library of the Public Library in Frankfurt am Main. Here we were offered a tour during which we discovered a music section where the users can borrow musical instruments as well as a wide variety of CDs, DVDs, vinyls, music scores and books. Furthermore, users could also use the music lab to record their own songs. Upon continuing our tour, we discovered numerous spaces for leisure and study, and many areas with shelves that contained either the movable or the stationary fund. After the tour, the librarians from the Public Library in Frankfurt showed us their digital catalogues and, later, the programs on robotics, coding and 3D printing, with a special emphasis on the way in which they use a robot called ADA in order to improve literacy skills in children.

In the afternoon, we went to the Sachsenhausen Library, part of the Public Library in Frankfurt. Here, we discovered a library dedicated mostly to children and teenagers, as the first floor was dedicated to documents for these types of readers, with a special area in place for those who wanted to play video games under the supervision of an adult specialist. Furthermore, on the first level we encountered the “library of things”, containing many objects such as bikes, trolleys, sport equipment and so on. The books and the audio-video documents on the second level were addressed to young adults and seniors, and there were

desks meant for studying, computers for accessing online documents and cozy couches for relaxation.



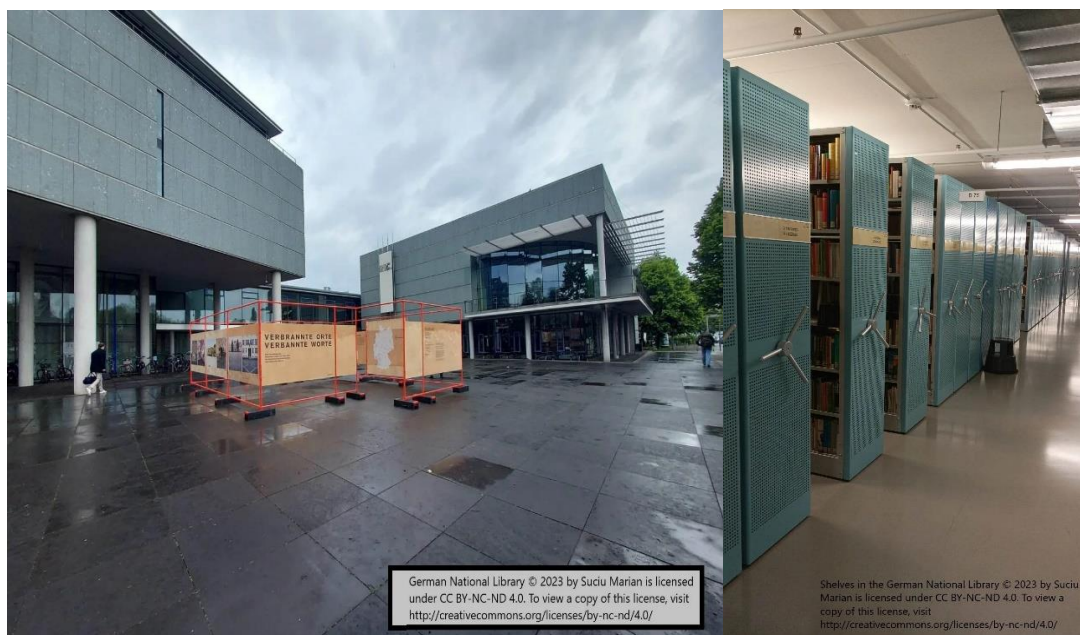
In the morning of May 11th, we visited Stadtbibliothek am Mailänder Platz, part of the Stuttgart City Library. The building of the library was designed by the Korean architect Eun Young Yi and became an attraction for tourists and photographers after its inauguration in 2011. The architect incorporated a large cubic chamber for meditation in the cubic form of the building, in a unique way, the cube being the main theme of the library. Even the shelves and signs have a cubic form. The building has a surface of 18.000 m² and houses over half a million of documents. On the ground floor, we discovered a special area reserved for those interested in reading the newspapers, the book returning machine, and the information desks. The first floor was dedicated to the music collection and had a Sound Studio and a Musical Instrument Borrowing Service. The second floor was dedicated to children, while on the rest of the levels contained the books meant for teenagers and adults. Moreover, the eight floor also had an Artotheque from which patrons can borrow graphic art.

In the afternoon of the same day, we visited Stadtbibliothek im Motorama, part of the Munich City Library, which is also one of the three locations where the books and employees of the Central Library of the Munich City Library had to move, during the reconstruction of the headquarters. The location Stadtbibliothek im Motorama is unique because it is situated inside a shopping center. This choice was made in order to be as close as possible to the

younger readers located in the vicinity of the old Munich Central Library. Therefore, it is not surprising that this branch focuses more on children's books and dedicated areas for activities for young readers. On the second floor, there is a space arranged for teenagers and young adults with curtains that can be drawn in order to create private study areas. Even if the library's goal is to attract younger readers, there are also books and audio-video documents for adults, and a special activity room, where adult readers can come to socialize or just read the press when the room used for activities.



On the last day, our group visited the German National Library in Frankfurt am Main. Here, the extensive digitization program developed by the National Library was introduced to us and we were told how the library has started to enrich their catalogue by retrospectively adding the context table of each book. We were then given a tour of the library. Firstly, we discovered the gigantic library stacks of 30.800 m², which contain over 13 million documents stored in 185 kilometers of shelving. Afterwards, we were introduced to the large convention room that can hold over 300 people, and the reading rooms with over 300 workstations spread over three floors. In the end, we were shown the permanent exhibition of the German Exile Archive 1933-1945 of the German National Library, "Exile. Experience and Testimony". The exhibition presents, in over 250 testimonies, the reasons for which the Jews in Nazi Germany ran from their home country, the routes and their helpers, but also explores their life in exile and their experience after the end of World War II.



After this experience, each participant in the study trip to Germany returned to Romania with considerably more knowledge related to the way in which libraries function in Germany and how librarians participate in the improvement of their local community. Suci Marian believes that “the German librarians try to satisfy both the older readers and the younger ones by offering both traditional services, such as borrowing physical documents, and modern services, such as loaning e-books or digital newspapers”. Pop Ioana thinks that „the study visit to the German libraries was a beneficial experience to observe the common points that public libraries in Romania have with those in Western Europe. At the same time, it was of great interest to observe the differences in order to identify solutions that would improve library services in Romania”. Illyes Claudia Carolina was impressed by “Anuk, the silent librarian from the Neu Ulm Library. As children with language difficulties (dyslexia, stuttering, or just insecurities) can come and read next to Anuk, the dog of the library”. Marian Mariana Lucia admits that she was impressed by the fact that German libraries “are real community and cultural centers [...], in which people of all ages and social mediums come to socialize, learn, get informed or only to read”. Oprea Petrișor Ioana asserts that she “was impressed by the librarians, their attitude, their freedom, and most of all, the joy that they put in their work every day”. Finally, Baci Diana believes that “the visit to public libraries in Germany represented an excellent professional opportunity to learn about the directions in development for libraries in terms of collections, services, programs offered to the community, about how the librarians are perceived and perceive themselves in their

profession and about the solutions they find to the problems they face. I felt very welcomed, and I felt like I am part of a community of dedicated professionals”.

Last but not least, we want to express our gratitude for the generous grant offered by Bibliothek & Information International, which enabled us to visit nine important library locations in five different cities. Through this grant we were offered a unique opportunity to learn about the important work of the librarians from the West of Germany. Furthermore, we were inspired by unique places such as the Makerspace from the Ulm City Library, the recording room from Stadtbibliothek im HP8 and Stadtbibliothek am Mailänder Platz, and by the innovative services, such as reading a book to a dog in the Neu Ulm City Library or reading a book to a robot in the Public Library in Frankfurt am Main.