

Professional visits report

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Interested in having a deeper knowledge of the activities and projects developed by German libraries in order to identify good practices and efficient techniques that could be implemented by the Romanian libraries, I decided to visit four libraries in Frankfurt am Main from 17th to 20th February 2025. Dealing with several types of libraries in my current tasks, I was curious to find more on the products, services and workflow processes of the Frankfurt Public Library and of three different size-types of academic and specialised libraries namely: Hochschule für Bildende Künste - Städelschule, Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences, and Frankfurt School of Finance & Management.

My professional visit has started with Bibliothek Städtelschule. Holding publications from fine arts, painting, film, photography, sculpture, is addressed to students who can search and find the information both from traditional catalogue and electronic catalogue provided by Alma. In the last few years, the library has been increasing the access to ebooks from ProQuest which are highly appreciated by the students.

The library catalogue can be discovered through the Frankfurt Museum Libraries portal, a unique point of access to information and collections from various cultural institutions in the densely populated city in the state of Hesse:

<https://www.museumsbibliotheken.de/de/sts.html>

With a very cozy atmosphere, the library welcomes users with the new titles recently entered into collections and the documents published by the university professors. In order to help students with a quick and efficient manner to find the bibliography needed for their classes, a shelf is prepared with the documents recommended by professors every semester. "We are a small library but actually this thing gives us the possibility to treat personally each student that use our library, getting to know better his/her information needs, making feel us like a family" said to me Mrs. Dorothee Vaas and Mrs. Judith Leitz, Library coordinators, who patiently and enthusiastically presented to me their activities.

In order to preserve and make accessible to everyone the lectures of the former or current professors, several CDs and DVDs have been digitized and included in the library online collections. Among books, periodicals, and albums, there are also the catalogues of the exhibitions held by the graduates each year.

An impressive action to keep alive the memory of the university is searching for news about the university, its professors, and students, published in five newspapers on paper that the Library is subscribed to. They are scanned, archived and sent also to the staff of the university.

The Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences Library was the second library visited. Mrs. Dagmar Schmidt, Head Librarian, and her colleagues showed me the facilities and explained to me the workflow of their tasks. The Library holds varied types of documents covering the topics of the studies related to computer science, engineering, architecture, law, social work, and business.

Through the student card, people enrolled in the university have automatically access to the collections and services offered by the library. All documents are arranged in direct access according to the knowledge field, with a special area for periodicals, and drawers for CDs and DVDs as complementary material of books. The library provides access to large collections of ebooks and scientific journals on a variety of subjects:

<https://dbis.ur.de/ALL/browse/subjects/>

As a complementary aid for the traditional and electronic catalogues, the library offers a list of free of charge AI tools that enhance the scientific literature search.

The institutional repository contains research publications, project results, and academic people involved in research activities:

https://fra-uas.hessenfis.de/converis/portal/overview?lang=en_US

The library also holds a special collection on history of social work and nursing that can be consulted only on site in a dedicated reading room.

Taking into account the need of the students to learn in a silent atmosphere, the library offers access to several group study rooms cozily furnished and with plants around.

A spacious room is dedicated both to workshops that professors organise for students (such as searching and retrieving information from the databases or the latest news on their fields), and to professional meetings with the Library staff.

Thinking of visually impaired and blind people, the library has devices dedicated to this category of users which are located in the PC room, a room equipped as well with computers, scanners and a copy-printing station for all people.

In order to provide independence and rapidity to borrow documents, the users can do it by their own using dedicated machine stations.

The materials that are considered not useful anymore for the library are exposed in a special corner ready to be taken free of charge by anyone interested in them.

As happened to many of us as users to forget or to lose personal objects, a special area is dedicated to such things.

The third library visited was the central headquarters of Frankfurt Public Library. With 16 branches spread all over the city and a Central Children's and Youth Library, Frankfurt Public Library holds a variety of documents on all the knowledge fields, including audiobooks, comic books, and vinyl records. In order to cover all the areas of Frankfurt, the Library provide access

to its collections through two Bookmobiles (the third one will be purchased in the near future) and one Bicycle bus (this one stops usually in parks and leisure zones).

Thanks to kindness of Mrs. Birgit Lotz, Executive Director of Central Libraries, and her colleagues, Mrs. Monica-Ioana Zacharias and Mr. Niklas Haberkorn, I was explained the activities and projects run by the Library.

I have learnt more about the acquisitions module of the library software and some insights on statistical data on collections usage delivered by the CollectionHQ software.

Regarding collections, many parts of them can be borrowed by users. Both borrowing and returning documents actions can be easily performed by their own at the machines stations.

The Library is involved in several digitisation and robotics initiatives. The staff frequently visit schools and invite pupils to come to the Library and teach them aspects of programming fundamentals. I would mention the Library owns a robot named Ada (it was baptized after a contest where people could send their name proposals) which can be used by children interested in.

The Library organises several events on different topics where people can freely join.

Being an inclusive institution, the visually impaired and blind people have a dedicated area with assistive devices.

The concept of the Library of Things has been very well embraced by the Frankfurt Public Library, several musical instruments can be used and borrowed. A special shelf is dedicated to objects that people don't use anymore and donate them to others in need.

As the building before was a bank settlement, the safe door has been kept in original format and nowadays is the entrance to the training room of the Library.

The Library of the Frankfurt School of Finance & Management, the fourth library of my schedule, is focused on documents related to Economics, Management, Law, Health Management, Psychology and Philosophy.

Situated in a modern building with 5 entries each one named by every continent, the library is opened to its users including by night (but without staff) because the users can have access through their library cards. Mrs. Heike Becht, Head of Library, together with Mr. Lucas Noah Vietz, detailed to me the processes and services offered. The users can take directly from the shelves the document needed. It is easy to find it because the collection is organised according to the knowledge fields. The library also provides traditional newspapers and journals, and scientific databases.

The access to full-text articles and monographs is easy because the library catalogue has incorporated EBSCO resources discovery tool.

The students can borrow and return books using the machine stations available for this purpose.

To monitor the level of occupancy, two infrared devices are situated at the entrance of the reading room and documents shelves and give a real-time number of users. To deliver equal access to information for all students, the library is equipped with special computers dedicated to visually impaired and blind people.

Several reading rooms with PCs named Finance Labs are available for users in order to focus better, in a silent environment.

Due to the growing number of persons that study in this University, a new campus has been established with the objective to help students to concentrate and learn easily. This building is very close to the Library and University and represents a significant advantage for their academic community.

In the above lines I tried to share my thoughts and impressions I gained during this extraordinary opportunity which has been made real thanks to the BI-International financial support. I highly recommend to all foreign colleagues to go to visit German libraries through the BI-International scholarship.

A big Dankeschön to all the colleagues I have met and to BI-International staff as well!

Photos to be included inside the text:

- 1- Bibliothek Städelschule
- 2- Publications of the Bibliothek Städelschule professors
- 3- Traditional catalogue of Bibliothek Städelschule
- 4- Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences Library
- 5- PCs Room of the Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences Library
- 6- Lost and found objects area at the Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences Library
- 7- Vinyl records at the Frankfurt Public Library
- 8- Bicycle bus of the Frankfurt Public Library
- 9- The entrance to the training room of the Frankfurt Public Library
- 10- Library of the Frankfurt School of Finance & Management
- 11- Finance Lab at the Frankfurt School of Finance & Management
- 12- Book return machine at the Frankfurt School of Finance & Management