

Summary



The Digital Transformation of Libraries / The German Library Association Supports Library Development with Various Programmes – Especially during the Pandemic (Kris-tin Bäßler)

(pp. 234 – 236)

In March 2020, when libraries were forced to close during the first wave of the coronavirus pandemic, the staff members of many libraries implemented changes in their services in a noticeably short time. It was the digital services, above all, which became an important instrument, alongside the newly organised in-person pickup and delivery services, to supply pupils and students, parents, teachers, or retirees with books, magazines, films as well as ebooks and audio books. The 2020 statistics for Germany's digital lending platform, »Onleihe«, clearly show that the use of e-lending and streaming services has multiplied. Between March and May 2020 a total of 3.7 million digital loans were recorded, compared with 2.6 million in the same period of the previous year. In addition, many libraries began to offer readings, programming workshops and reading promotion projects in a digital format.

Nonetheless this first lockdown, and also the second one that started in November, showed that there were many services and programmes that libraries could only partially provide, if at all. Smaller libraries, in particular, lack the necessary technical facilities to offer services in a digital or at least hybrid format. The digitalisation of library services and the creation of modern applications and forms of communication require financial resources, expertise in the area of IT technologies and continual on-the-job training opportunities for the current staff. In many institutions there is still a lack, moreover, of technical infrastructure, such as broadband, wireless hotspots, or up-to-date hardware and software.

Staying Visible and Effective During a Pandemic / Innovations at the City Library of Duisburg Despite and Due to COVID-19 (Jan-Pieter Barbian)

(pp. 256 – 261)

It took a good deal of hard work to re-open libraries again for the general public after the weeks-long lockdown in April and May 2020. Frequently revised safety regulations and Germany's official »AHA« rules (comparable in English to: »Hands. Face. Space«) demanded a high degree of discipline from both the library staff and also library patrons. The restrictions applied not only to the lending process, but also to public events which were once again scheduled by late summer. Yet, in the end, we were all thankful to be able to return to the kind of normal daily life we had taken for granted before the pandemic. So it seemed. But when, in the fall, the second wave of rapidly rising numbers of infections forced a second lockdown, including of public libraries – beginning in November or December depending upon the *Bundesland* – it became clear that we would have to adapt our lives around the coronavirus for a longer period of time, and perhaps permanently.

And now, after the latest re-openings, it cannot be ruled out that as a result of virus mutations and the continued lack of widespread vaccinations a third wave could lead to a further lockdown. This raises the fundamental question as to how libraries can continue to develop their services under these difficult conditions. What can and must be permanently changed in order to remain visible for our clientele in everyday life, in whatever becomes the new state of »normality«? How can libraries continue to be effective in providing orientation to a society that is in the midst of an existential crisis? What strategic goals should be pursued in order to present a clearly defined identity, internally as well as externally, in these turbulent times?

ARDUINO on Tour / The Mobile Makerspace of the City Library of Frankfurt am Main (Elke Lang, Elfriede Ludwig)

(pp. 270 – 273)

The City Library of Frankfurt am Main, in cooperation with the Darmstadt University of Applied Sciences, has developed a project to offer a mobile library makerspace. Elke Lang and Elfriede Ludwig describe how it works in their BuB article:

Here we are – in an oversized space at the branch library in Frankfurt-Höchst, under conditions dictated by the coronavirus. Six participants have come to the workshop and are diligently working on their projects. They are fitting cables and electronic parts (LEDs, sensors, displays, switches, etc.) onto circuit boards, then coding, testing and revising the setups. Their mentors give explanations, ask questions and help the participants. The workshop is scheduled to last three hours, but at the end nobody really wants to leave: »We are not finished yet.« »Next week there will be a second part to the workshop – we'll come again and keep on working.«

This is just a small glimpse into the ARDUINO workshop at the City Library of Frankfurt am Main – one building block in the library's digitalisation strategy. The project is the mobile version of the library's plans for a future makerspace. The workshops take place a regular basis. At the moment they are held at one specific location, but in the future they will rotate between a total of 18 different locations within the library system. In this way all residents of the city of Frankfurt will have easier access.

Cooperation between the City Library of Frankfurt and the Darmstadt University of Applied Sciences has been beneficial in three ways: providing library users with attractive opportunities, expanding the digital skills of the library staff, and enabling students to have direct experience with practical situations.

Translated by Martha Baker