

Summary



»What you »The Carbon Footprint in Cultural Institutions« (Sebastian Brünger) (pp. 160 – 163)

Flooding, heat waves, droughts, wildfires have already made the effects of the climate crisis highly visible in many places. With the Paris Climate Accords of 2015 nearly 200 nations committed themselves to striving to limit global warming to a maximum of 1.5 degrees. In its legislation on climate protection, Germany has established a goal of reducing carbon emissions by 65 percent, based on the levels in 1990. These lofty goals are only achievable, however, when they are perceived as a task for the entire society, and a process of transformation also takes place within the cultural sector.

Increasingly, the cultural scene in Germany has shown itself committed to making an active contribution to overcoming the climate crisis. Cultural institutions such as museums, theatres, and libraries see themselves of venues for achieving self-understanding and for sharpening social awareness. Numerous artistic undertakings and interpretive projects are now devoted to taking a critical look at this topic from many vantage points. At the same time artists and institutions are seeking to find tools and methods with which to align their work to the goals of ecological sustainability in a plausible and effective manner.

In Germany there is currently a lack of basic data, secure knowledge, and experience within the cultural sphere – including in the library world. Despite the fact that more and more libraries have begun to reflect upon their own activities in terms of the 17 goals of the UN Agenda 2030 and strive to become »green libraries«, it is still fundamentally the case that the climate impact of the cultural sector remains a »blind spot«. Hence these questions: where to begin, where do we stand, and what are the decisive levers that need to be activated?

Making Food Salvaging Visible / Pankow City Library Initiates Project Against Food Waste in Berlin (Eva Katharina Hage) (pp. 167)

In Germany nearly 12 million tonnes of food are discarded as waste products every year. A large portion of this food is actually still fit for consumption. One possible solution could involve re-directing consumable food items to so-called distribution stations.

With this in mind the Heinrich Böll Library in Berlin's Pankow borough initiated a pilot project in June 2021. Equipped with a refrigerator and an open cupboard for dry goods, the borough's public library has become a distribution station for donated food items. Members of the library staff accept and inspect donations, while making a note of the donor, such as via their library card. Then the food items are made available to all library visitors at no charge. Daily maintenance of the storage facility involves cleaning, inspecting fresh food, and checking the storage temperature.

Members of the local initiative »foods-haring«, a climate activist group, are especially regular donors to the library's project. In small teams they pick up surplus food items from grocery stores, bakeries, and restaurants. These are distributed among their acquaintances or brought to various distribution points. In this way several tonnes of groceries can be salvaged. The Pankow library's refrigerator has been positively received. Donated items quickly find takers. In the meantime, the library's neighbours also on occasion bring around their surplus groceries. And others even come into the library specifically to see what useful items can be found on the food shelves.

Climate – Changes and Challenges for Cultural Institutions / Information and Insights from the 10th Conference on Collection Preservation (Kerstin Jahn) (pp. 188 – 191)

The earth's climate is changing more and more. The results can be seen in catastrophes such as flooding in the Rhineland in 2021 and the increasing frequency of wildfires. The state of our climate is of decisive importance, however, when it comes to preserving the holdings of our institutions for coming generations. Climate change poses huge challenges for institutions that strive to preserve our cultural heritage. Heavy rains, heat waves and droughts create problems for buildings, for storage concepts and for the usage of cultural artefacts. Cultural institutions, such as libraries, are not only battling with rising average temperatures, but also with changes in relative humidity. While in the past thresholds could be moderated, air conditioning devices can no longer compensate for the extreme fluctuations of today's world. This results in outages, water damage, the growth of mould and other problems. Such emergencies need to be avoided by implementing forward-thinking climate-based plans for construction and daily operations that are safe, economical and sustainable.

Many institutions are overwhelmed by these issues and see themselves confronted with a wide range of questions: how has climate changed in recent years and what further developments can be expected? How will these affect our cultural heritage? How does the outside climate influence the climate within buildings and thus within stacks and depots where cultural artefacts are stored? What acute damage could occur to library holdings due to climate changes? What insidious processes are foreseeable? How can cultural artefacts be protected? This article by free-lance conservator Kerstin Jahn provides answers to these questions.

Translated by Martha Baker