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During the night of the 8th of November 1989 I crossed the German-German border at Hof. I was driving in a ministerial car, returning from an official mission at Dresden. A medieval manuscript that had been held in the GDR since the 2nd World War was to be returned to Heidelberg, where it originally belonged.

I was quite used to this well-guarded prison-border. On that night, however, the 'People's Policemen' were particularly nervous: more guardsmen than usual kept their watch and additional border controls had to be passed.

24 hours later, I knew that their nervousness had been justified. 'Trabi' after 'Trabi' was lining up at this border. Thousands left the GDR to re-unite peacefully, and without bureaucratic hindrance, with the other Germans in the West. Still, none of us then knew that this night of bliss would be followed by unification so soon. My colleague Burgemeister from Dresden and I, had agreed already, on the 8th, that unification was inevitable in the end. We predicted that the German fellow-feeling and the horrendous economic differences between this people that shares so much, would ultimately necessitate such a step.

For German librarians the divide had never been very deep in the first place. It was prohibited to take western literature into the GDR by car: other routes of interchange remained open, however. Inter-library loan requests by east German colleagues could usually be dealt with promptly. The books they ordered passed the Iron Curtain officially and without any problems. At the beginning of the eighties a small crisis emerged; our colleagues in the GDR were forced to use international order-forms instead of the German, red, ones. Some colleagues in the West were so upset by this measure that

they imposed tariffs on GDR orders. The majority, however, continued to supply orders free.

"Direct exchange" between library and library also worked quite well: one book of western literature was exchanged directly for one eastern publication. Special collections like the art history collection of Heidelberg University Library, were able to use this mechanism for exchanging books with the Dresden library. This way they managed to export western books into the GDR which were not paid for in hard currency.

HARD CURRENCY: this term indeed sums up the real problem. If we look at the acquisition practice of academic librarians in the GDR, the statistics at first sight look odd. Great variations over time and countries are typical. The amount of money which was used for bookbuying did not depend on the demand, for instance for British or American publications. Such decisions depended more on the amount of hard currency which the GDR generated in exports. When a higher surplus in trade was generated with exports to France than with those to Britain, more French books were acquired by east German libraries.

This practice shows the background of the deficits which we had to overcome in the process of unification. It may be useful first to give a quick historical sketch. First, of course, there was the undarkened joy of the 9th of November 1989 and its aftermath. The opportunity to meet one another was followed up by librarians as much as other Germans. Westerners gave book donations to eastern libraries, some provided copying machines, some helped with a missing piece for a machine. Little deeds, like the provision of a new PC or some shelves, for example, accumulated into an impressive manifestation of solidarity. The institutions also started cooperating. The Federation of German Library Associations had been established in the West in September 1989 and I had been elected as the first spokesperson. Soon, meetings with the East German Library Association were arranged: the first one met in Heidelberg. In March 1990 there was a meeting in

Rostock, then still GDR. In July 1990 the constitution of the east German Association was remodelled, it was changed effectively to equal that of the Association in the West. The unification of the two Federations was now the declared aim on both sides. In March 1991 this aim was achieved at a unification ceremony at Göttingen. At first a distinct staff union was organized for east Germans within the Federation, but it was dissolved in May 1991, as only a fully united organization promised to be effective in an already united state.

On the political scene there was not much time to waste. The willingness to finance support-schemes for the East was strong and widespread: the Federal government, the governments of the Länder, as well as many private schemes were all open for suggestions on how they could most effectively help Germany to "grow together". A support-scheme of Baden-Württemberg assigned link-libraries in the West to oversee a certain amount of acquisition money for their east German colleagues. A scheme of the Volkswagen scholarship fund worked similarly. 10 million deutschmarks were provided, on condition that the east German proposals to spend this money were checked and monitored by westeners. East German colleagues understandably felt these schemes to be unnecessary impositions. Fortunately another scheme was devised in which our east German colleagues could be involved in the decision-making process. We managed to loosen 15 million deutschmarks from the pockets of the Federal Minister of Education and Science. This money had to be used on basic, frequently-used study-texts, and was to improve study conditions at east German universities. A newly established working group, the "Bund Länder Arbeitsgruppe Bibliothekswesen", which involved east and west Germans alike, lead the negotiations. We managed to convince the ministerial staff that west Germans should only provide relevant information to their east German colleagues. They gave lists of heavily-used materials in western libraries to them, while the ordering, acquisition, and payment of the books were done by the east Germans themselves.

The result was positive, but a lot of work now had to be done by our colleagues. Day and night they spent in their libraries trying to spend all the money given to them by the end of 1990: this indeed was untypical. While unemployment hit east Germany hard, our colleagues had to work innumerable extra hours. Unemployment for library staff was, if not always avoided, at least postponed for a considerable while.

The working group, Bibliothekswesen, achieved a few other important immediate results. All large libraries in the "new Länder" as they now were called, were equipped with PC networks and CD-ROM servers were installed in most. New acquisitions could now be fed immediately into a computer system. As a result some east German libraries were provided with better computer equipment than some of their colleagues in the west.

To ensure a sustained and effective development of university libraries they had to become part of another financial scheme. The Federal government and the governments of the Länder established a cooperative funding system in the late 60s. Investments in institutions of higher education have, since then, been supported equally by the Federal government and the government of the Land in which the investment takes place. This fund provides resources for a diverse range of projects. New computersystems as well as bookstocks for new libraries are all financed by it. East German university libraries are not new, of course, but, given the lack of western literature in these libraries we were able to convince the sponsors that the situation indeed is quite similar. Hence, east German university libraries will be given substantial financial support over the next 12 years: they will get sums comparable to those which have been spent on the stocking of new libraries in the West over the last decades. The east German libraries that benefitted were given between 3.5 and over 5 million deutschmarks and since 1991 this money has been at the disposal of my east German colleagues.

The work of the libraries committee (the working group) had further positive side effects. Ministerial and university staff, as well as librarians, were all invited to discuss the papers. We met frequently to discuss a whole range of issues. Information was shared, misunderstandings avoided. Between the government and the officials of the library associations, a fruitful cooperation developed: deeper trust between the different agencies was easily generated. This trust will give future library projects in Germany a firm ground to build on. Financial support for new and vital library work, especially for the East, will be easier to acquire on the basis of it.

Turning to the development of public libraries it should be noted that traditionally the Federal government has no rights in public education and cultural affairs, so public libraries are usually financed by municipal authorities, sometimes supported by grants from the Länder. Therefore the central government did not feel obliged to help public libraries with the necessary transitions. The good example of state and university libraries, as well as the unique historical circumstances, helped to overcome these problems. Considerable sums were poured into the re-stocking and restructuring of east German public libraries. Through this support public libraries were able to update their collections and re-establish their attractiveness for the reader. They overcame the low loan numbers that had plagued public libraries in 1990 and reasserted their role as an important place for public information.

All these efforts ensured a sufficient flow of acquisitions into the new Länder. Indeed, almost too many books had now to be dealt with whilst other necessities were more difficult to acquire. Space, for books, readers and librarians, became an increasingly difficult problem. No new space was available and, as a survey showed, 85 % of the libraries in use were built before 1945. Buildings that had been destroyed in the 2nd World War had only partly been rebuilt. The University Library of Leipzig and the University Library of Jena are

disheartening, but typical, examples of this lack of reconstruction and modernisation. Most buildings in use are in a rather sad shape themselves: new buildings are therefore a necessity. In the meantime fast and efficient help must be given through provisional expedients. Non-used industrial facilities can, for example, become a stock-storage space for a few years.

The restoration of the Leipzig University Library can now be commenced. A very fascinating plan for the old building has been devised and work on the ground has already started.

Other aspects of the east German legacy were far more positive. Indeed, the working group felt that the general structure of librarianship in the east was worth preserving. Here all university libraries were part of a centralized system. This system compared favourably with the often uncoordinated university individualism in the west. Ministers and government officials were advised to keep and deepen this structure: in most cases this advice did bear fruits. The legislation passed in the different Länder did not impose any major changes on the eastern university library system but left the structure in most of its parts, still in place. Nevertheless the struggle to defend it is far from being ultimately won. Even today library directors spend time daily lobbying for this system and trying to prevent it from being changed.

Computer networking also figured prominently on the working group's agenda. Six networks were first put into place in the old Länder and now a seventh completes their geographical extension. The working group suggested that the new Länder should simply join these networks. This seemed more sensible than trying to set up new networks on no, or an insufficient, base. This suggestion fortunately was fully implemented. By now, east German libraries have agreed to become members of one of these networks. Full network facilities have effectively been extended to the east (Fig. 1, from Informa-

tionen zu den regionalen und überregionalen Verbundsystemen der Bundesrepublik Deutschland. Berlin 1993).

The equalization of payments and the recognition of the different educational degrees of East and West formed another intriguing but difficult set of problems. The working group made a list of suggestions on these topics which were implemented by the governments, too.

All in all the dedication of the working group has lead to a large number of successful developments over the last few years. Indeed, the coordination between east and west German libraries is now facilitated efficiently. The growing together of east and west German libraries has been supported and strengthened by the working group's achievements. More than most other professional groups in Germany, librarians now really speak one language: We define our problems together, as one united group. This became apparent at the first librarians' congress after unification, which took place in Leipzig in June 1993. The same problems and achievements were identified by east and west Germans alike (Bibliotheken '93). Most important, of course, are the financial problems, which are largely a result of unification. Areas of the old GDR are now the poorest areas in the EC, their GDP being even lower than those of Portugal or Greece. The financial problems that this imposes on Germany as a whole have by now become painfully obvious. A financial crisis is looming - a crisis we will all have to face. Our problems are the same. This way we are one country. No 'us' and 'them' applies when we have to fight for financial support: no 'us' and 'them' can be allowed to divide us when we have to ensure the future of German libraries, together.

We have already achieved the united future in some specialized areas by unanimous agreement. The main national libraries have been fused. The former two legal deposit libraries - the Deutsche Bücherei, Leipzig and the Deutsche Bibliothek, Frankfurt, as well as the Deutsche Musikarchiv in Berlin - now

form one national library. This library is called "Die Deutsche Bibliothek".

Leipzig and Frankfurt have started to share their work. A list has been drawn up which outlines clearly which books have to be sent to Frankfurt and which to Leipzig. No extra work is required in either branch.

Obviously the work-flow, in detail, is still quite different. More than 40-years division cannot be eradicated overnight but already working methods are being standardised. A common computer network - the Dutch PICA system - will start working in November. This will serve the two German libraries in Leipzig and Frankfurt, as well as the Music archives in Berlin.

The unification of the two state libraries of Berlin has also been completed. Retrospective conversion, which is necessary for building a common computer database, is being done at present. SAZTEC has to transform 5 million catalogue items into machine-readable form during the next few years. A well-coordinated scheme for the future working of the two branches has been developed. The "Scharounbuilding" will become an information library where new acquisitions and recent stock will be at the users disposal. The building in the Unter den Linden will be transformed into a research library where older stock will await academic readership.

Furthermore, Unter den Linden aims once again, as before the 2nd World War, at providing a central reading room. This will replace the ugly and badly-constructed magazine towers which today are at the center of the building complex. Where new magazine space will be created is another open question, however. New plans of the Mercedes Benz company unfortunately conflict with the original library's plans. The library and the Prussian Cultural Fund do not want to accept this fate: they hope to overturn the company's plans. They too will work hard for their well-defined goals.

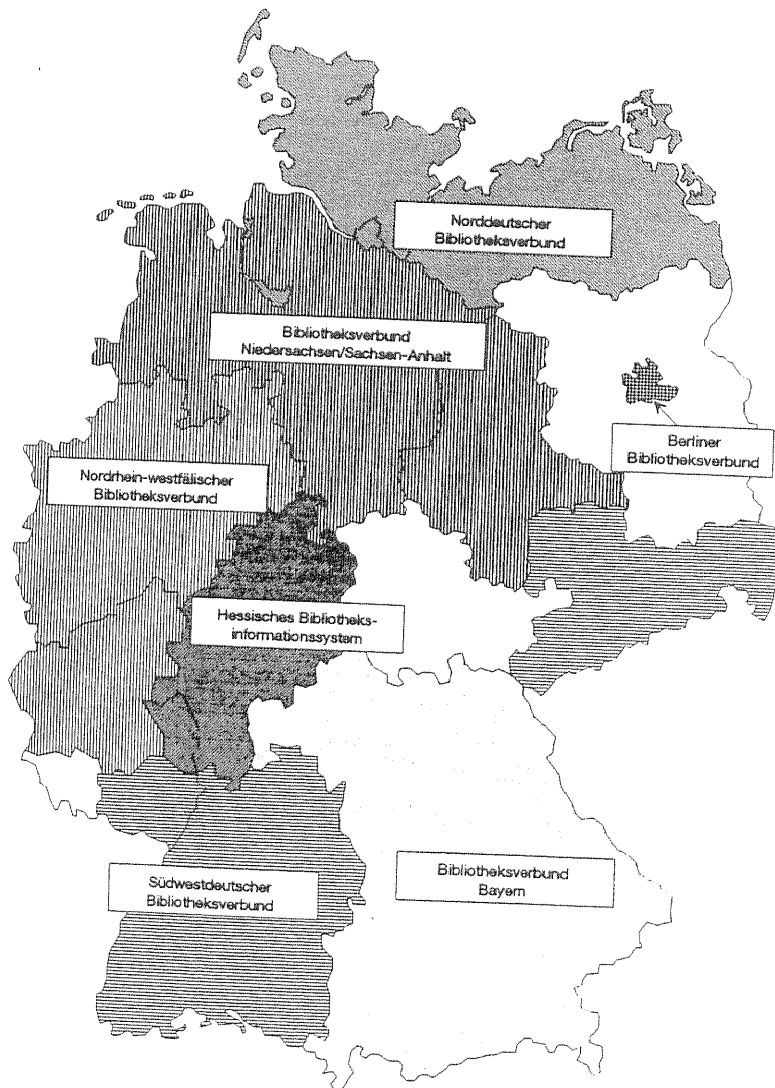
It should now be obvious that recent developments in libraries in Germany have not taken place without problems. Yet, you can

also see that German librarians do know exactly what they want. We see our problems and work together to overcome them. Our dedication will hopefully lead to success. This success is certainly vitally needed. You too, I should think, must hope with us that it is achieved. Only an efficient Germany in the middle of Europe will be a stabilizing factor in an interdependent world. Only a united Germany can be of use to an uniting Europe. What we learn now, in the process of German unification, we will be able to share when Europe, when the world, is finally moving together.

Further reading:

- (1) Bundesvereinigung Deutscher Bibliotheksverbände. Bibliotheken '93. Strukturen - Aufgaben - Positionen. Göttingen 1994.
- (2) Bund - Länder - Arbeitsgruppe Bibliothekswesen: Abschlußbericht 1990 - 1992. Empfehlungen und Materialien. Berlin 1993 (DBI-Materialien. 126).
- (3) Informationen zu den regionalen und überregionalen Verbundsystemen der Bundesrepublik Deutschland. Berlin 1993.
- (4) Bundesvereinigung Deutscher Bibliotheksverbände: Bibliotheken im zusammenwachsenden Deutschland. Berlin 1991.
- (5) Bund-Länder-Arbeitsgruppe Bibliothekswesen. Empfehlungen zur Förderung der Bibliotheken in den neuen Bundesländern. Berlin 1991 (DBI-Materialien. 106).

Regionale Verbundsysteme der Bundesrepublik Deutschland
- Kooperationen -



Regionale Verbundsysteme der Bundesrepublik Deutschland
- Kooperationen -

	<p>Bibliotheksverbund Bayern Sitz der Verbundzentrale: München</p>
	<p>Berliner Bibliotheksverbund Sitz der Verbundzentrale: Berlin Kooperationspartner: Brandenburg (geplant)</p>
	<p>Bibliotheksverbund Niedersachsen/Sachsen-Anhalt Sitz der Verbundzentrale: Göttingen Kooperationspartner: Thüringen (geplant)</p>
	<p>Hessisches Bibliotheksinformationssystem Sitz der Verbundzentrale: Frankfurt/M Kooperationspartner: Nördlicher Teil des Regierungsbezirks Rheinhessen-Pfalz des Landes Rheinland-Pfalz</p>
	<p>Norddeutscher Bibliotheksverbund Sitz der Verbundzentrale: Hamburg Kooperationspartner: Bremen, Hamburg, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Schleswig-Holstein</p>
	<p>Nordrhein-westfälischer Bibliotheksverbund Sitz der Verbundzentrale: Köln Kooperationspartner: Regierungsbezirke Koblenz und Trier des Landes Rheinland-Pfalz</p>
	<p>Südwestdeutscher Bibliotheksverbund Sitz der Verbundzentrale: Konstanz Kooperationspartner: Südlicher Teil des Regierungsbezirks Rheinhessen-Pfalz des Landes Rheinland-Pfalz, Sachsen (Sächsischer Bibliotheksverbund SBV)</p>
	<p>Keine Teilnahme an einem Verbund: Saarland</p> <p>Geplante Teilnahme an einem Verbund: Brandenburg, Thüringen</p>