

INFORMATION LITERACY: AN INTERNATIONAL STATE-OF-THE ART REPORT

Germany
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A. Introduction:

The enhancement of information literacy skills has become one of the core activities of German librarians and information professionals working in higher education environments¹. In their understanding, developing information literacy aims at substantial and sustainable information management skills which surpass the knowledge needed to use a library. Accordingly, they regard the teaching library in Germany as not only a traditional user education service, but as a major contribution to everyone's career as a lifelong learner. Librarians working in the field of information literacy instruction define their role more and more as mediators who support learning processes. Public and university libraries increasingly offer information literacy lessons and courses collaborating with other educational institutions such as schools and colleges. But for specific reasons explained below, most of the teaching librarians in Germany are university librarians, and the training of information literacy is focused on the particular needs of students.

The brief history of the teaching library in Germany² tells us that the first information literacy enhancement activities date from the late nineties of the last century when more and more electronic media were licensed by university libraries. In 2001 the Institute of Social Studies (Sozialforschungsstelle) in Dortmund published the alarming results of an official investigation into students' abilities to deal with electronic sources³, stating that these abilities were insufficient and deserving further advancement. This was a confirmation of the early teaching libraries and an encouragement for other libraries to invest in information literacy activities. The first decade of 21st century is likewise a period of fundamental change in the world of German universities, since regional authorities have reduced public responsibility and funding and are promoting academic self-government, and since degree programs are to be adapted to the Bologna criteria. In these times of change all university bodies must redefine their roles and positions. In defining the enhancement of information literacy as a core activity university, libraries are asking to participate in university teaching in general and to contribute substantially to students' information skills acknowledged as basic abilities in the Bologna papers. Since the recruitment of new students at local colleges is part of many university survival strategies, a large number of university libraries now offer information literacy training programs for students of these colleges. In conclusion, university libraries' engagement in cultivating information literacy is

¹ See Harald Gapski, Thomas Tekster: Informationskompetenz in Deutschland. Überblick zum Stand der Fachdiskussion und Zusammenstellung von Literaturangaben, Projekten und Materialien zu einzelnen Zielgruppen, Düsseldorf: Landesanstalt für Medien Nordrhein-Westfalen 2009
http://www.lfm-nrw.de/downloads/Informationskompetenz_in_Deutschland_August_09.pdf

² See Claudia, Lux, Wilfried Sühl-Strohmer (Ed.): Teaching Library in Deutschland. Vermittlung von Informations- und Medienkompetenz als Kernaufgabe für Öffentliche und Wissenschaftliche Bibliotheken, Wiesbaden 2004, and Ute Krauß-Leichert (Ed.): Teaching Library – eine Kernaufgabe für Bibliotheken, Frankfurt a.M. 2007 and Schwerpunkt Teaching Library, in: BuB. Forum Bibliothek und Information 159 (2007), No. 11/12

³ Rüdiger Klatt (et al.): Nutzung elektronischer wissenschaftlicher Information in der Hochschulausbildung. Barrieren und Potentiale der innovativen Mediennutzung im Lernalltag der Hochschulen. Endbericht, Dortmund 2001. See: <http://www.stefi.de/>

based on students' needs as certified by the famous Dortmund investigation in 2001 and by diverse library policy deliberations.

Public libraries in Germany are seeking to enumerate advancement of information literacy as one of their core activities.⁴ They traditionally invest in the promotion of literacy and reading which can be appreciated as *conditio sine qua non* to information literacy. They usually also cooperate with schools and colleges for the purpose of user education; "Partners in media – libraries and schools", endorsed by the Bertelsmann Foundation, and the German Language and Literature Curriculum of Federal State Hansestadt Hamburg are two very successful projects in this field. The internet platform "Lernsystem Informationskompetenz" (Information Literacy Learning System)⁵ has been established by pioneer Detlev Dannenberg to support and network all information literacy activities of public teaching librarians. These activities are contributing to lifelong learners' information literacy at the decisive age of adolescence. Recently the educational function of public libraries was stressed in the first German library act issued by the Parliament of Thuringia in 2008.⁶ This may encourage public librarians and their funding authorities to invest further in information literacy training programs dedicated to the specific needs of (non-collegiate) users.

It is common sense that university information literacy enhancement activities comprise courses by library staff members and unified e-learning via a university's intranet. These double-stitched training programs are called "blended learning", which it is hoped will stimulate and support the acquisition of information literacy skills on the student's own initiative. Because of the above-mentioned library policy deliberations, the German information literacy community also agrees upon the need to make information literacy training programs compulsory at university level. Today, university librarians offer information literacy products to students both outside and within the core curriculum, whereas within the core curriculum information literacy products are as a general rule compulsory. It makes sense that the training of the teaching librarians is based upon the standards of education theory incorporated by universities in Germany.⁷

Most of the German information literacy librarians have linked their job with those of their partners, creating bottom-up networks, working committees, and communication tools (see chapters D and F). Due to the Federal nature of education in Germany, there is a variety of regional information literacy working committees (Arbeitsgemeinschaften) established in a German federal state or a region. Corresponding to the federal understanding of all educational matters there are also diverse settings of information literacy standards, a phenomenon foreigners find difficult to understand and digest. The German information literacy community may be well diversified, but it nevertheless has managed to create a major communication tool for the whole community: the gateway <http://www.informationskompetenz.de/> hosted by the library of Ludwig Maximilians-Universität in Munich. Besides regional meetings and conferences, the annual conference of the German librarians (Deutscher Bibliothekartag) serves as central meeting and exchange place for the information literacy community.⁸

In conclusion, enhancement of information literacy in Germany is basically a matter of university libraries seeking to redefine their position in fundamentally changing university environments. The information literacy landscape is a federal and a diversified one. But the information literacy community succeeds in creating central meeting points: at the annual conference of German librarians and online at www.informationskompetenz.de .

B. [Online] Information Literacy Products for users:

⁴ See Detlev Dannenberg: Die kleine Öffentliche Teaching Library, in: Büchereiperspektiven (2008), p. 20f. http://publikationen.bvoe.at/perspektiven/bp1_08/s20-s21.pdf

⁵ See <http://www.lik-online.de/index.shtml>

⁶ See <http://www.bibliothekerverband.de/lv-thueringen/Thueringer-Bibo-Gesetz.pdf>

⁷ See <http://www.bildungsserver.de/zeigen.html?seite=121> and <http://www.hochschuldidaktik.net/>

⁸ See the programs of recent Bibliothekartage <http://www.bibliothekartag.de/archiv/>

Since “blended learning” programs with courses and online-tutorials are spread throughout German universities, there is no need to enumerate all German information literacy products. In our report we will concentrate on the happy few issued by key players in local information literacy, namely Freiburg University Library, Heidelberg University Library, Konstanz University Library, Munich Ludwig Maximilian University Library, Düsseldorf University Library, Hamburg-Harburg University Library, and Tübingen University Library. These tools are web-based and designed for undergraduate and graduate students. Most are tutorials allowing self-paced and self-directed learning; some are more course-based. They are hosted on proprietary learning management systems, such as “Ilias” (Integriertes Lern-, Informations- und Arbeitskooperations-System)⁹, and are available to institutional members only, whereas others are open systems, available for access and use by the wider public, for example “Lotse” (Library Online Tour and Self-paced Education)¹⁰

- “DOT Informationskompetenz” is the online-tutorial designed by Düsseldorf University Library. For further information see <http://www.ub.uni-duesseldorf.de/home/ik/dot>
- The University Library of Freiburg offers more course-based online information literacy products to the students. See <http://www3.ub.uni-freiburg.de/index.php?id=3089>
- “DISCUS” (Developing Information Skills & Competence for University Students) is a bilingual online-tutorial developed by Hamburg-Harburg University Library offering hands-on access to self-paced and self-directed learning. Hamburg-Harburg teaching librarians are responsible for facilitating scientific search and retrieval. For further information, see <http://discus.tu-harburg.de/login.php>
- Konstanz University Library has designed online-tutorials for undergraduate beginners as well as for advanced graduate learners. http://ilias.ub.unikonstanz.de/ilias3/goto.php?target=cat_37&client_id=ilias_uni
- The teaching library activities of Munich University Library are focused on courses; interactive e-learning facilities are still under construction: <http://www.ub.uni-muenchen.de/schulungen/>
Munich University Library is also searching for sustainable data concerning user research and information behavior in order to use this knowledge in the design of sophisticated online-tutorials.

Project “BibTutor”¹¹, dedicated to the development of an electronic tutor system for research in information sources, is an accompanying measure to the above-mentioned information literacy enhancement efforts; it is hosted by the German Research Center for Artificial Intelligence at Kaiserslautern University and funded at national level by the Federal Ministry for Education and Research (Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung).

Proposals for further readings to chapter B:

- Jörgen Pfeffer: Online-Tutorials an deutschen Universitäts- und Hochschulbibliotheken. Verbreitung, Typologie und Analyse am Beispiel von LOTSE, DISCUS und BibTutor, Masters Thesis, Fachhochschule Köln 2005
- Simo Xalter: Konzeption und Einsatz von Online-Tutorien und E-Learning-Modulen zur Vermittlung von Informationskompetenz an wissenschaftlichen Bibliotheken in

⁹ See [http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/ILIAS_\(Software\)](http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/ILIAS_(Software))

¹⁰ See <http://lotse.uni-muenster.de/>

¹¹ See http://www.bibtutor.de/content/e14/index_eng.html

Deutschland, Tübingen 2006

http://w210.ub.uni-tuebingen.de/dbt/volltexte/2006/2263/pdf/E-Learning_OPUS_Tueb_Xalter.pdf

- Thomas Hapke: Perspektive E-Learning – die Rolle von Universitätsbibliotheken in neuen Lernumgebungen, in: Ute Krauß-Leichert: Teaching Library – eine Kernaufgabe für Bibliotheken, Frankfurt a.M. 2007, p. 41 ff.
- Sandra Zilles: Das BMBF-Projekt BibTutor, in: Margret Ockenfeld: Leitbild Informationskompetenz – Positionen, Praxis, Perspektiven im europäischen Wissensmarkt, 27. Online-Tagung der DGI = 57. Jahrestagung der DGI. Proceedings, Frankfurt a.M. 2005, p. 61 ff.

C. Publications

The German information literacy debate focuses on practical aspects such as standardization rather than theoretical or systematic facets of the issue. Major primary sources of information literacy activities are helpful for retracing the history of information literacy standardization in Germany. In the beginning there was the translation of the ACRL standards in 2002¹²

- Benno Homann: Standards der Informationskompetenz. Eine Übersetzung der amerikanischen Standards der ACRL als argumentative Hilfe zur Realisierung der "Teaching Library", in: Bibliotheksdienst 36 (2002), p. 625 ff.
http://bibliotheksdienst.zlb.de/2002/02_05_07.pdf

followed by the publication of "Standards for the Advancement of Information Literacy" by the Information Literacy Working Committees of the Federal states Nordrhein-Westfalen (2003), Baden-Württemberg (2006) and Bayern (2009):

- Annemarie Nilges (et al.): Standards für die Vermittlung von Informationskompetenz an der Hochschule, in: Bibliotheksdienst 37 (2003), p. 463 ff.
http://bibliotheksdienst.zlb.de/2003/03_04_07.pdf
- [Arbeitsgruppe "Netzwerk Informationskompetenz Baden-Württemberg"](http://www.informationskompetenz.de/fileadmin/DAM/documents/Standards%20der%20Inform_88.pdf): Standards der Informationskompetenz für Studierende
http://www.informationskompetenz.de/fileadmin/DAM/documents/Standards%20der%20Inform_88.pdf
- Fabian Franke: Mit Informationskompetenz zum (Studien)-Erfolg. Die bayerischen Universitäts- und Hochschulbibliotheken beschließen Standards für die Durchführung von Informationskompetenz-Veranstaltungen, in: Bibliotheksdienst 43 (2009), p. 758 ff.

While the first genuine German guidelines for information literacy advancement focused on goals, educational theory, and assessment of courses and e-learning tools dedicated to the cultivation of students' information literacy, the recent information literacy standards from Bavaria – a Federal state with remarkable networking traditions and structures – stress embedding and integrating these blended learning programs into collegiate teaching in Bavarian universities. The diversity of information literacy guidelines is a mirror of the short history of information literacy enhancement in Germany: the early standards translate the idea of filling information literacy gaps stated by the Dortmund investigation in 2001, and the Bavarian paper reflects various library policy deliberations in order to consolidate the position of librarians at university campuses in times of change.

¹² See also vom Orde, Heike and Wein, Franziska: IFLA-Guidelines on Information Literacy for Lifelong Learning, German translation: <http://www.ifla.org/files/information-literacy/publications/ifla-guidelines-de.pdf>

Recommandations for further reading:

- Benno Homann: Internationale und deutsche Standards der Informationskompetenz, contribution to: Roundtable Informationskompetenz: Brauchen wir nationale Standards?, Köln, HBZ on 6 November 2008
http://www.hbz-nrw.de/dokumentencenter/tagungen/roundtable/homann_ikstandards_081106.ppt#2
- Standards der Informations- und Medienkompetenz für deutsche Bibliotheken, in: Claudia, Lux, Wilfried Sühl-Strohmenger (Ed.): Teaching Library in Deutschland. Vermittlung von Informations- und Medienkompetenz als Kernaufgabe für Öffentliche und Wissenschaftliche Bibliotheken, Wiesbaden 2004, p. 169 ff.

D. Organizations

German teaching librarians organized themselves by creating bottom-up networks and working committees at federal state or regional level. Today we know the following networks and working committees covering all Germany:

- [AG Informationskompetenz in Nordrhein-Westfalen](#), set up in 2002, with teaching librarians from universities and universities of applied sciences
- [Thüringenweite AG Benutzerschulung](#), set up in 2002, with teaching librarians from universities and from public libraries
- [Netzwerk Informationskompetenz in Baden-Württemberg](#), set up in 2003, with teaching librarians from university libraries
- [Arbeitsgemeinschaft Informationskompetenz \(AGIK\) im GBV](#), based on a library consortium spreading over various Federal states in Northern and Central Germany
- [AG Informationskompetenz in Bayern](#), set up in 2006, with teachings librarians from universities and universities of applied sciences
- [AG Informationskompetenz in Rheinland-Pfalz und im Saarland](#)
- [Netzwerk Informationskompetenz Hessen](#)
- [Netzwerk Informationskompetenz Sachsen](#)
- [Arbeitsgruppe Bildung und Informationskompetenz der DGI](#), an institutional working committee in addition to the above-mentioned regionally-based groups¹³

All these networks and working committees shaping the teaching library landscape in Germany are important stakeholders in information literacy matters since they organize professional communication and trainer development at regional and national level and support information literacy enhancement at the local level.

For further details see

- Mario Hütte: Zur Vermittlung von Informationskompetenz an Hochschulbibliotheken – Entwicklung, Status quo und Perspektiven, Masters Thesis, Köln 2008
http://www.informationskompetenz.de/fileadmin/DAM/documents/Zur%20Vermittlung%20von%20_69.pdf
- Holger Schultka: Bibliothekspädagogik und die Arbeit der AG Benutzerschulung des Landesverbandes Thüringen im DBV, in: Bibliothek – Forschung und Praxis 29 (2005), p. 59 ff.

¹³ See also the working committee's memorandum:

<http://www.dgd.de/Userfiles/DenkschriftInfokompetenzBildung.pdf>

- Wilfried Sühl-Strohmeier, Wilfried: Das Netzwerk Informationskompetenz Baden-Württemberg (NIK-BW). In: Expressum. Informationen aus dem Freiburger Bibliothekssystem (2005), No. 5, p. 3 f.
- Fabian Franke: Bayern: Arbeitsgruppe Informationskompetenz im Bibliotheksverbund Bayern, in: Bibliotheksdienst 40 (2006), p. 754 ff.

E. Training the trainers

Because the advancement of information literacy in Germany is basically a matter for teaching university librarians, their professional development has been shaped by the principles of university educational theory. There is a well-known “professional school” at Freiburg University named “Arbeitsstelle Hochschuldidaktik der Universität Freiburg”¹⁴ also open to instructional librarians.

The regional librarians’ associations as well as the above-mentioned networks and working committees also offer training for teaching librarians.

Future teaching librarians have the opportunity to be introduced to the core business of advancing information literacy during their education in departments of library science at universities of applied sciences.

For further reading see:

- Elisabeth Simon (Ed.): Medienkompetenz · Information Literacy. Wie lehrt und lernt man Medienkompetenz? How does one learn and teach Information Literacy?, Berlin 2003

F. Communication

As a result of the diversity of the German teaching library landscape there is a rich variety of communication tools and connections. Besides the main gateway

- <http://www.informationskompetenz.de/>

the information literacy community gets together at

- the annual conference of the German librarians
<http://www.bibliothekartag.de/>
- various regional library conferences like the annual [Verbundkonferenz des GBV](#) or [HBZ Verbundkonferenz](#)
- [Die lernende Bibliothek / La biblioteca apprende](#), a biennial special conference for teaching librarians, set up in 2003
- diverse special workshops with international participation like [Konstanz Workshop on information literacy](#) in 2007
<http://www.ub.uni-konstanz.de/bibliothek/projekte/informationskompetenz/kwil.html>

Articles and reports on IL instruction are published regularly in major German library journals such as

- Bibliotheksdienst¹⁵
- BuB – Forum Bibliothek und Information¹⁶
- Zeitschrift für Bibliothekswesen und Bibliographie¹⁷

¹⁴ See <http://www.hochschuldidaktik.uni-freiburg.de/>

¹⁵ See <http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bibliotheksdienst>

¹⁶ See <http://www.b-u-b.de/Aktuell/intro.shtml>

Furthermore, members of the German IL community discuss and socialize via email listings¹⁸, wiktionary¹⁹ or blogs²⁰.

G. Conclusion

The German information literacy community is a vital and progressive body with strong stakeholders at local and regional levels. When inventing the teaching or learning library, German information professionals succeeded in redefining their role and position within fundamentally changed campuses. Libraries are no longer simply information depositories; they have been established as places of learning where knowledge is kept in motion. Librarians are not only custodians or gatekeepers of knowledge; they are now mediators of fundamental learning skills. The federal understanding of all educational matters is a challenge as well as an opportunity and contributes to the variety and richness of information literacy activities in Germany.

Wn, 5.8.2009

Wn, 31.10.2009

¹⁷ See http://www.klostermann.de/zeitsch/zfbb_hmp.htm

¹⁸ See <http://www.informationskompetenz.de/regionen/baden-wuerttemberg/mailling-liste/> or <http://www.inetbib.de/>

¹⁹ See <http://www.informationskompetenz.de/glossar/> or <http://www.gbv.de/wikis/cls/Informationskompetenz> or <http://ikglossar.twoday.net/>

²⁰ See <http://blog.hapke.de/?p=248>