

# Report

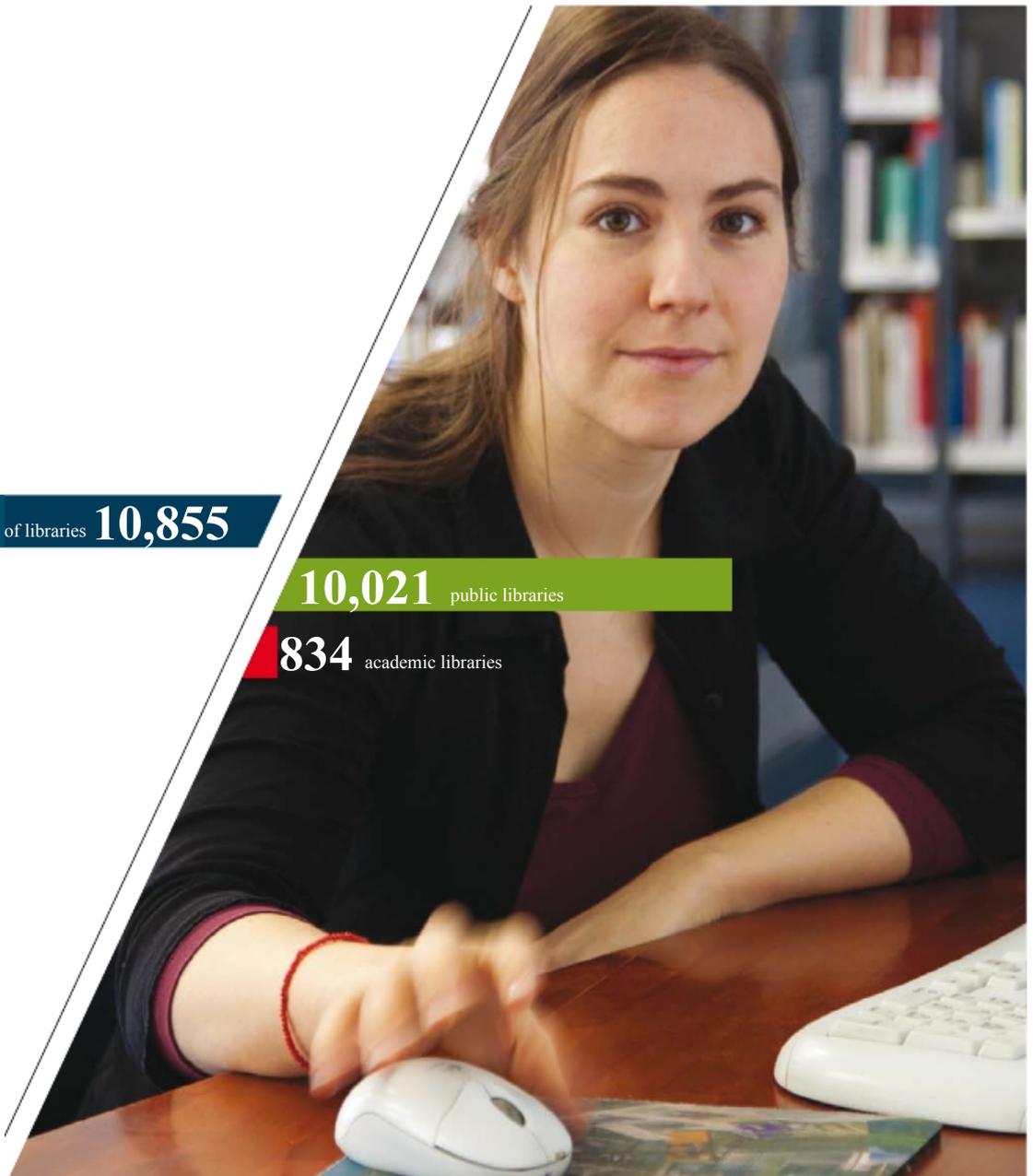
on Libraries in Germany

# 2010

Total number of libraries **10,855**

**10,021** public libraries

**834** academic libraries



## Libraries reach out to people...

*Monika Ziller, Chairwoman of the dbv*

... lots of people! But they could reach many more if only the German library network was closer knit and had fewer holes. For example, only one local authority in three in the 5,000-10,000 residents bracket supports a local library at all. The blame can be placed squarely on insufficient funding of public commitments, on the unwillingness of politicians to recognize libraries as educational institutions and on failure to provide library services with the legal safeguards they require.

The Report on Libraries in Germany is the first publication by the German Library Association to bring together comprehensive statistics on library facilities, services and usage in the Federal Republic. An important impetus was the current public financial situation. In the wake of the worldwide financial crisis many public budgets have developed a severe imbalance. These substantial budgetary deficits have led to enforced and often rigid cuts. The first to be affected are often the local authority's "optional services", involving many cultural facilities including local public libraries.

Libraries are the most heavily-used educational institutions outside the school system. It would indeed be a sad day for the Educational Republic of Germany so proudly proclaimed by the government coalition parties in their joint agreement if – of all services – libraries were to be sacrificed in the name of fiscal consolidation. But according to a survey conducted by the dbv among its member libraries in the spring of 2010 this is exactly what appears to be happening. The only long-term solution is the introduction of binding legislation governing the running and funding of libraries in cities, local communities, schools and universities.

For as the current report equally demonstrates, many libraries are far from fulfilling the minimum standards laid down in the publication issued by the Federal Union of German Library and Information Associations, "21 good reasons for good libraries". This report not only confirms the great potential benefits of the library system but also reveals the deficits in the system's density and in library equipment standards. Its aim is to promote the discussion of library development plans and library laws.

The Educational Republic of Germany needs people from all walks of life and social backgrounds, people who as children have experienced libraries as places to discover books and the art of story-telling. Later on in life libraries offer support for the learning process at school and provide books, games, magazines and music for leisure activities. They lead their users into the world of the new media and help them learn to use the internet and its infinite resources with confidence. They are the very backbone of learning and research within our universities.

Libraries accompany the citizens of the Educational Republic of Germany throughout their lives. Without them we would have no hope of securing our future position within the international competitive framework. We need our libraries today more than ever before.

*Monika Ziller*

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## Ambition and Reality

Libraries are secret windows you can look through to see into other lands, cultures and hearts, says the author Rafik Schami. A most appropriate analogy, thought the German Library Association. For years the Association has been striving to throw open these windows to as many people as possible – a goal desperately in need of binding legislative support. At EU level standards have already been set. Two thirds of the EU member countries have already passed library laws. In the past few years they have almost all been updated to bring them into line with the fast-paced changes taking place within the information society. Germany is still trailing far behind and this is the reason why the German Library Association has taken the initiative in promoting the nationwide implementation of library laws at various levels. However it is far from a simple task, for the appropriate legislative power lies with the individual federal states. And they are in no hurry, even though the German parliament's Committee of Enquiry into Culture in Germany recommended the enactment of library laws and the establishment of public libraries as a mandatory service at the end of 2007. Happily, there are some exceptions: The first library law came into force in the federal state of Thuringia as long ago as 2008. Admittedly, this law does not define local community public libraries explicitly as a mandatory service. However it is a good start. Saxony-Anhalt followed Thuringia's example in June of this year; Hesse followed suit at the beginning of September. This encourages us to hope that further federal states will follow. Libraries are the most intensively-used cultural and educational institutions in Germany. They are forward-looking centres of free access to knowledge, learning and research. They deserve a reliable legal basis within the Educational Republic.

Article 5 of the German Basic Law:

**(1) Every person shall have the right freely to express and disseminate his opinions in speech, writing, and pictures and to inform himself without hindrance from generally accessible sources.**

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10,855 libraries in Germany  
303,600 activities are organised every year by our libraries  
660,000 patrons visit our libraries each day  
10,820,000 readers are registered library users  
200,000,000 patrons visit our libraries each year  
362,000,000 media units are held by our libraries  
466,000,000 media units are borrowed by users each year

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### Attendance figures compared

in millions



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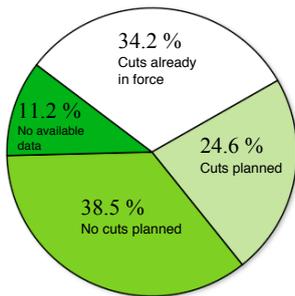
Source: German Library Statistics (DBS) 2009, [www.bundesliga.de](http://www.bundesliga.de), Spitzenorganisation der Filmwirtschaft e.V. (Umbrella Organisation of the German Film Industry), Destatis, Statistisches Jahrbuch 2009 (Statistical Yearbook 2009), Institut für Museumskunde (Institute of Museum Studies)

## Libraries in distress

Libraries have a social mission but one it is becoming more and more difficult to fulfil. In addition to books, DVDs and CDs public libraries are also expected to provide cosy corners for reading and computer workstations. They design special programmes to help young children to develop active language skills. They hold regular reading or training sessions for adults. And libraries would like to provide blanket coverage of these services - but there is simply not enough money to go round.

### „Has your library been affected by funding cuts?”

More than half of Germany’s local community public libraries are affected by current or planned cuts in their funding.

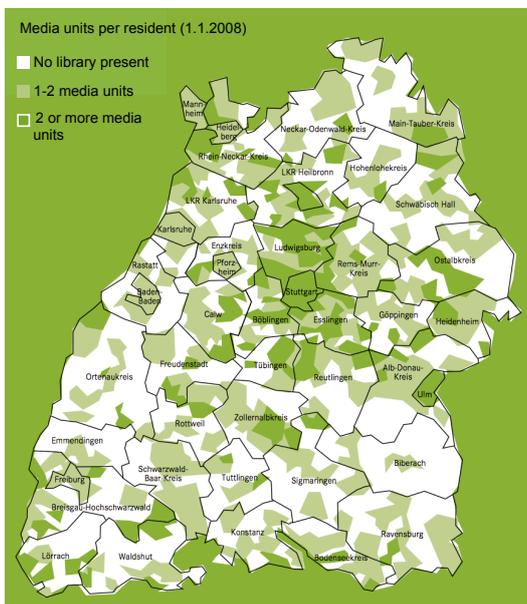


May 2010, dbv survey on the current financial situation

Only one in three libraries can afford to refresh as much as 10% of its holdings on a regular basis. Only 41 percent of local authority libraries can afford to purchase two media units per resident. The Federal Republic does not do much better compared internationally: Per capita spending in public libraries is 8.21 Euro. In Finland libraries spend 54.55 Euros, in the USA 36.36 US dollars or about 27 Euros (1.10.2010).

Rural areas suffer from an additional problem: Only one in three libraries in the 5,000-10,000 residents bracket is able to support a public library at all, according to dbv figures from 2007. In Baden-Württemberg public library provision is above average compared to the nation as a whole. The “Library of the Year” hails from this area for the second year running.

And yet the path to free information can be long and winding, even in this exemplary federal state. One in five Baden-Württemberg citizens lives in a community with no local public library, according to the Baden-Württemberg Library Association. And these blank spots on the map will likely increase in number throughout the country. Library service coverage in local communities with upwards of 50,000 residents is almost 100 percent. But the libraries enjoy far from uniform amenities: Five percent of libraries in communities with between 50,000 and 100,000 residents spend more than 3.12 Euros per resident on new media. But 25 percent have to make do with less than 90 cents. At the same time the importance of libraries as a “third place” with no obligation to spend any money is increasing. This is why public libraries are in desperate need of more dependable funding, integration into the education planning process and the definition of the library service as a binding local authority commitment.

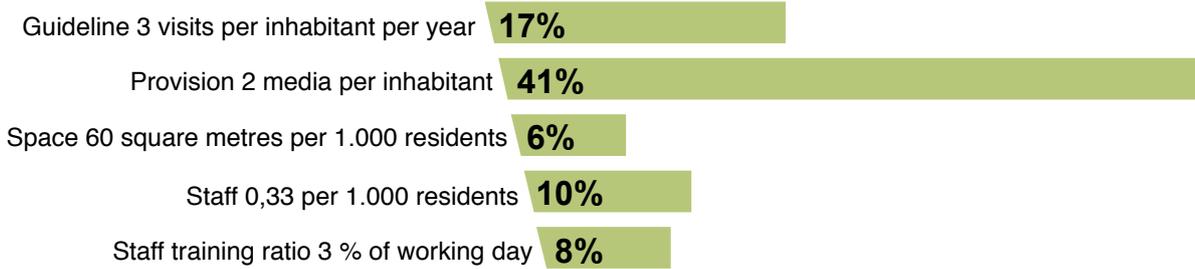


## Libraries in Baden-Württemberg

Citizens of this model federal state enjoy above-average library provision. With their 28 million visitors the local authority public libraries are among the most intensively-used educational and cultural institutions in the state. In spite of this, one in five residents of Baden-Württemberg lives in a community without a local public library.

State Statistical Office of Baden-Württemberg, Stuttgart 2009

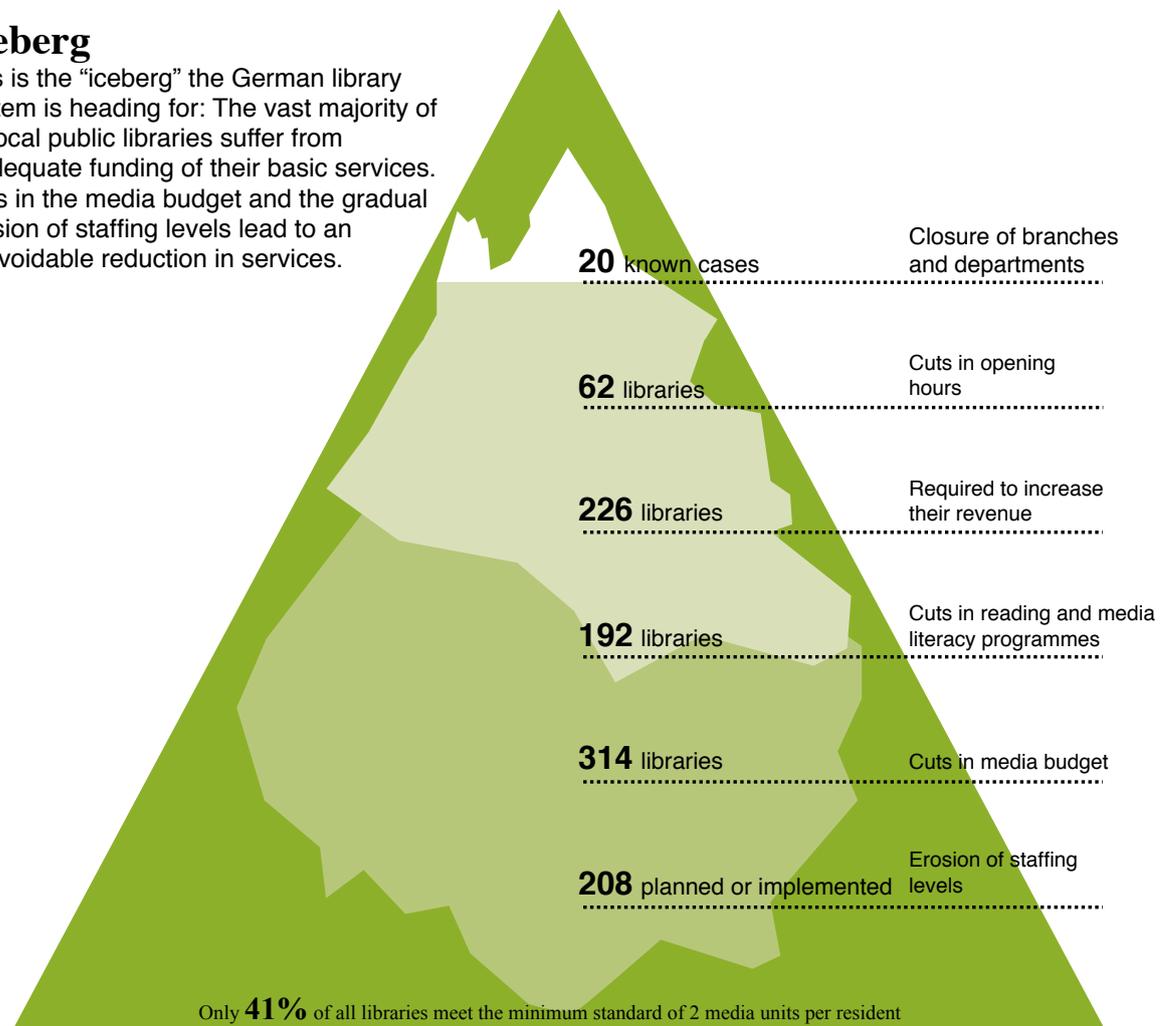
## How many professionally-staffed libraries meet the minimum standards?



Source: DBS 2009; Minimum standards defined in „21 good reasons for good libraries. The principles of good libraries. Guidelines for decision-makers.“ Ed. Federal Union of German Library and Information Associations 2009

### Iceberg

This is the “iceberg” the German library system is heading for: The vast majority of all local public libraries suffer from inadequate funding of their basic services. Cuts in the media budget and the gradual erosion of staffing levels lead to an unavoidable reduction in services.



Source: Survey conducted by the dbv in April/may 2010 among 1284 libraries in municipalities and communities of all sizes; 907 questionnaires were completed.

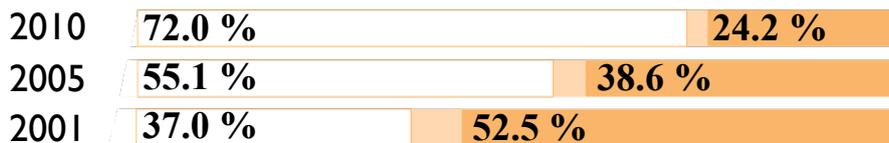
## Online information for everyone

Read a newspaper, search for a book, look up a foreign word – you can do all this today on the internet. And this has dramatically changed the way we deal with information. Much internet content is free, and it's delivered in a fraction of a second. The world's store of knowledge is available at the drop of a hat. And so the question arises: Do we need libraries at all? Yet the money invested in buildings and in non-virtual media still fulfils a basic human need: Everyone appreciates an architecturally appealing environment, the chance to work and learn with others and a quiet public space. Libraries fulfil their educational and information mandate, whilst at the same time promoting communication within the community. Virtual and material spaces do not compete; they complement each other. This is one of the main reasons libraries provide internet access for their visitors. For amidst the general euphoria over the World Wide Web it is often forgotten that not everyone has internet access. It is true that the proportion of the population which regularly uses the internet has doubled in the past ten years. But there are still 19 million German citizens over 14 years old who do not use the internet at all, as has been documented by the N(onliner) Atlas, Germany's most comprehensive study on internet use. The study was commissioned by the Initiative D21 and has been conducted for the past ten years by TNS Emnid / TNS Infratest.

The digital divide runs between town and country, young and old. It can only be bridged by universal media literacy and free access to computers. This is where libraries come in. They already offer a variety of digital services such as internet, electronic periodicals, E-books or databases. Unfortunately the funds available for the provision of these services are far from adequate. This means amongst other things that only 77 percent of all libraries with professionally-staffed local public libraries are equipped with internet workstations. And only just over 60 percent provide online access to their catalogues.

"Libraries are open places anyone can use for free", says Dr. Rolf Griebel, Director General of the Bavarian State Library. "They enable the weaker members of society to give their children as good a start in life as possible whilst at the same time keeping themselves up to date". In this respect the contribution libraries make to our knowledge society cannot be overestimated.

### Increase in internet use



Onliner    Planning to go online    Offliner

Source: [www.nonliner-atlas.de](http://www.nonliner-atlas.de), 2010

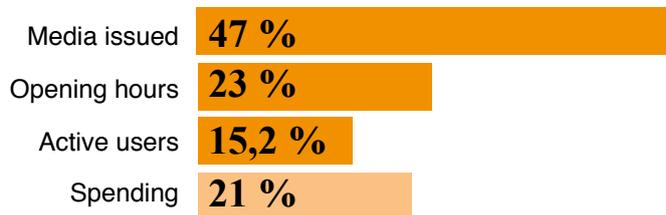
## Know-mans land

Without its academic libraries – and we don't just mean architectural highlights like the Grimm Centre at the Humboldt University in Berlin or the Information, Communication and Media Centre in Cottbus – the German education and research landscape would be unthinkable. University and higher education libraries provide current literature from all over the world and access to modern digital information resources as a matter of course. Internet access and computer workstations are essential to the training of future scholars. Yet spending on acquisitions and new technology continues to increase, as too does the size of the information market which has to be dealt with. And what about the budgets of the academic libraries? They continue to lag behind. Sadly behind.

Students and academic staff, researchers and others simply interested in scholarship are all dependent on academic libraries. Not only do these libraries act as repositories for the collective cultural memory, they also function as instruments of modern information and knowledge management. Libraries are responsible for preserving traditional printed books and manuscripts and for making them available to scholars as source material. But libraries also provide modern research facilities. Qualified staff help users track down the information they need on the internet. This new area of activity has already made its mark on the training of future librarians. By the time they finish their studies they have mastered the basics of information technology and know how to put them to work for the advancement of knowledge. Libraries are even responsible for generating digital content themselves through the creation of electronic publishing platforms or the initiation of their own digitalisation projects

As the numbers of students in Germany continue to rise – in the past ten years they have leapt from 1.8 to 2.1 million – so also does the number of media issued on loan by academic libraries: Over the last ten years it has increased by 47% to reach a total of 96 million. The number of active users per week has climbed by 15.2 percent to reach 2.85 million, while weekly library opening hours have been increased by 23 percent to an average of 66. In the same period academic library spending reached 835 million Euros – an increase of a mere 21 percent. Taking into account the rate of inflation, this means a minimal enhancement of around 5 percent. Germany is competing in the international arena for the best brains. The headlines are dominated by reports of demographic change and the lack of available qualified staff. Can the education and research centre Germany tolerate such a discrepancy in the training of its next generation?

### Growth within the 834 academic libraries in Germany 2000-2009



Source: dbv

## **The increasing diversity of society leads to a greater demand for education.**

Some arrived in Germany as immigrants, some were born here. But all are full of ideas and the will to achieve great things – and they're also all citizens from migrant backgrounds. Germany is becoming more diverse very year. In 2008 19 percent of the population came from a migrant background, a total of 15.6 million people. According to the Federal Statistical Office this proportion has increased; in 2005 it was only 18.3 percent. Turkey heads the list of the most important countries of origin, followed by the successor states of the former Soviet Union together with Poland and the member countries of the former Yugoslavia. And the immigrants from all these countries are eager to have their say when it comes to making decisions which will affect their future lives – by no means an easy process. Often a person's chances of success are determined by his or her cultural origin. For example, according to the Federal Statistical Office 14.2 percent of the population have no general school-leaving certificate. This is a considerably higher percentage than the rest of the population, where the level is 1.8 percent. In addition, people from migrant backgrounds between 25 and 65 years old are more than twice as often unemployed than those of German origin: 12.4 percent as opposed to 6.6 percent of the general population.

So citizens from migrant backgrounds have special needs – and libraries can play an important role in satisfying them. The availability of a range of different activities and a wide selection of media coupled with language training and multilingual library services can help migrants develop a variety of essential skills and promote their social integration. Libraries offer immigrants tips on naturalisation and can help both new arrivals and those already been here for some time. And another thing: Libraries stock a wide range of foreign-language dictionaries and language courses, helping not only migrants but also German native speakers to discover the richness of cultural diversity.

## **The wide choice of media provided by libraries is a major factor in the encouragement of language learning:**

- textbooks and learning materials in a variety of languages help learners master German
- fiction, non-fiction and films promote active use of the language
- foreign-language and bilingual materials together with multilingual picture-books for reading aloud help develop mother-tongue expertise.

## **Visit at leisure, use with pleasure**

Libraries are open, public spaces anyone can use - at no charge and with no pressure to buy. There are no entrance fees, no application formalities and no examinations required. And there are few barriers involved in using the services they offer, from Turkish daily newspapers, music CDs, do-it-yourself books to current political non-fiction titles and coursebooks in computer programming. Libraries are open and at the same time protected educational spaces anyone can use having to belong to any particular institution. This is especially important for women and children.

## Home at last

It's easy to demand more money. But a lot more difficult to prove you actually need it. In the case of libraries it's worth looking to the western borders of the German Republik. The Integration Council of the city of Herne carried out a survey among target groups aimed at obtaining a more detailed picture of age structure and library service usage among library patrons. Particular emphasis was placed on immigrants as a target group. To ensure representative results, interviews were conducted with 906 library patrons, either directly in the library or online via the city library's website. Another 168 readers at the junior mobile library, mostly primary schoolchildren, were also questioned. The results showed that there are clear differences in age structure. On average, library users with no background of immigration were 42.3 years old as opposed to library users who did come from a migrant background and who with an average age of 27.2 years were a full 15 years younger.

The group of school children contained an above-average number of pupils from a migrant background. These pupils used the library not only to learn and work but also as somewhere they could communicate with others. The fact that libraries are highly rated by young immigrants is confirmed by another statistic indicating an inverse relation to age. The largest group of library users are those in employment – almost 40 percent. There is a strong imbalance within this group: Nine out of ten of library users in employment do not come from a migrant background; only ten percent belong to the immigrants group. According to the Stiftung Lesen (Reading Foundation), persons with migrant backgrounds account for over 20 percent of library users nationwide. This means that the library is the one educational institution in which people from migrant backgrounds truly feel “at home”. Here they are no longer in the minority but are able to take part in cultural and education programmes as equal partners – the younger they are, the more actively they participate.

## Learn to get ahead

The verdict is a life sentence – but no-one need worry. It simply means the learning process by no means ceases on completion of vocational training or a university education. The world of work is changing fast. It is difficult to imagine any area where further training is not a prime concern. Libraries offer a free service. Both the number of library users and the number of media they borrow from libraries have increased constantly over the past few years. This growth is due partly to a rise in demand and partly to an increase in service provision: Not only do libraries offer a wider variety of media, the number of projects and educational activities has increased too.

### Wide range of learning materials

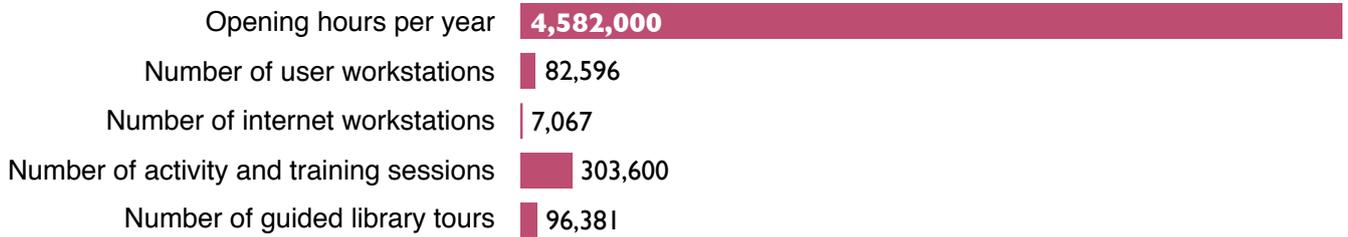
- 
- non-fiction and specialised literature
- 
- language courses
- 
- educational software
- 
- careers advice information
- 
- databases and e-media
- 
- facilities designed for concentrated learning, such as quiet workspaces, computers, internet access,
- 
- some libraries offer special learning environments or learning centres, for example combining multimedia work stations, learning-centered media, guidance and courses
- 
- cooperation with proponents of Lifelong Learning
- 
- educational counselling
- 
- joint activities with adult education centres or independent educational institutions
- 

Libraries as learning centres not only promote focussed, easily accessible learning, they also help their users navigate knowledge as a whole. Libraries are the only institutions specialising in support for informal and non-formal learning. Anyone can learn in a library without having to enrol on a particular course. Guidance is always available but on an optional basis and without obligation. Generous opening times mean people can visit the library when it best suits them – in some cases libraries provide access to learning materials 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

### Study in the library helps promote

- 
- self-directed learning
- 
- creativity
- 
- cooperative learning
- 
- multimedia learning
- 
- interactive and result-centred learning
- 
- interdisciplinary learning
- 
- systematic approach to research methods
-

## The contribution of public libraries to life-long learning



Source: DBS 2009

## Room for creativity

Thoughts are free. Libraries give them room. Libraries are repositories of our cultural heritage, spaces for thinking and discussing, for encouraging the exchange of ideas and creativity. From the creative writing club to the art exhibition, homework help group or reading competition, from reading corners, discussion and work groups to further education activities or tips on what to read – the blend of motivated staff, traditional media and modern information technology enables library users to take an active part in all forms of cultural activity.

“Libraries deserve the very best reviews”, says the literature critic, journalist and advisor to the annual library campaign “Meeting-point Library”, Marcel Reich-Ranicki. Like many other celebrities from every corner of our society he too is a strong supporter of libraries as cultural and educational institutions. By the way, you can find his books in the ... well, you know where!

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