DETERMINING FACTORS FOR EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS IN CHILDREN'S LIBRARIES

What distinguishes Germany from some other countries is a general expectation that children (and adults) do not rely on school alone to achieve a successful education, but actively seek other educational opportunities. Public schools are free-of-charge to attend, and in addition to them, many other institutions support lifelong learning or offer advanced training, for example via Evening Schools. Open to all and informal in scope, access is available for minimal fees. Evening Schools offer educational programs to (young) adults, thereby supporting those who wish to advance their education and professional success. Public children's libraries are open to every child and teenager and offer a wide range of media and information resources to support success in school. In a way libraries are part of the public educational service, but due to the principles of self-determination, self-organization, and a personal responsibility for the pursuit of success, every child, woman, or man must decide for themselves if they want to avail themselves of these unique opportunities. Children's libraries encourage children and teenagers to make use of their offerings by mixing educational programs with leisure time activities – in a very successful way. For example, the Children's and Young Adult Library of the Central and Regional Library in Berlin alone had 12.900 participants in 753 events and programs in 2018.

If you are interested in more information or if you would like to contact selected libraries on specific topics, check out the brochure "Libraries for Children and Young Adults in Germany" (in English), published in 2018 by the German Library Association (dbv). You can download the brochure at

https://www.bibliotheksverband.de/fachgruppen/kommissionen/kinder-und-jugendbibliotheken/publikationen.html

EVENTS AND EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS AT GERMAN LIBRARIES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG ADULTS

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THE MISSION OF LIBRARIES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG ADULTS IN GERMANY

Children and young adults are among the most important audiences of public libraries in Germany. Libraries for children and young adults facilitate young people's participation in a democratic society, and support and encourage the development of individuals as emancipated citizens. Libraries present easy access to a wide range of current media and information, and programming that is relevant for this population. They provide kindergartens and schools with events of a pedagogical nature, as well as a wide range of media – which, for the most part, is free-of-charge.

SUPPORTING LITERACY DEVELOPMENT

In general, German children's libraries are aimed at children aged 0-12 and their families, kindergartens, schools, and educators. Libraries for young adults serve teenagers from 12 to 18 or older. They all offer a range of current media, suitable for the age groups the library aims at.

Libraries also help to build literacy in many different ways, by offering storytimes on a weekly or monthly base, summer reading clubs, holiday programs and activities, teen book clubs, computer clubs, and gaming afternoons. These activities and more immerse young people in a literacy-friendly environment, even if books and reading play a minor role at home.

Some libraries host courses on early literacy development for parents with very young children (0-3 years). Here parents meet and learn about developmentally appropriate ways to promote reading, using books and apps for the youngest children. These courses provide a great opportunity for the library to reach out to the local community, especially to hard-to-reach populations, or those with difficult social or financial backgrounds.

EVENTS AND PROGRAMS

The allocation of books and other media items, and supporting literacy, is at the center of the children librarian's work as well as supporting literacy building. In the mornings, children's libraries usually host group visits from kindergartens or schools. These groups borrow media, take part in events aimed at reading promotion, or trainings related to media and information literacy. They might also attend library programs for diverse age groups. Some such programs include:

● School-age classes visit the local library and students participate in modularly designed library introductions. Using tablets, that are widely available across German libraries, and software such as Actionbound, library staff is easily able to collaborate with teachers to create interesting and engaging programs related to school's curricula.

● Kindergarten groups watch Kamishibai Theater presentations (a Japanese miniature theater where stories are told while changing picture after picture on the wooden stage) or picture book cinema performances.

● Story hours for kindergarten groups are enriched with hands-on craft activities.

● Reading events with famous authors or presentations of recently published books are one of the ways in which the library promotes reading to young people aged 3 to 18.

● Monthly events on new apps for children are aimed at the whole family, as are book groups or storytelling programs.

● Children's libraries serve their users with workshops on computer-aided robotics and coding, movie maker workshops and DIY events, like upcycling, crafts, or sewing.

● Some libraries also collaborate with local kindergarten or elementary schools to host a range of professional development activities for teachers and educators related to promoting reading and literacy, STEM learning, or library services in general.

Over the last five years, German children's libraries have increasingly focused on STEM learning. STEM is the acronym used today for science, technology, engineering and mathematics (in German: MINT). Many libraries offer a Maker Space and related programs for school classes or as a holiday activity.