

Libraries

in Germany

2023

Issues
Figures
Demands



dbv

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bibliotheks
verband



Dear readers,

What were you doing last Sunday? Maybe you visited a museum, went to the cinema or watched a play in a theatre? Unfortunately, anyone who enjoys taking advantage of the wide range of leisure time, meet-up and educational opportunities offered by public libraries is unable to do so on a Sunday. This is because public libraries in Germany are legally prohibited from employing staff on Sundays and thus opening

In its coalition agreement, the federal government has undertaken to remedy this failing. It is now time to make good on this commitment and create legal certainty nationwide that public libraries may open on Sundays. After all, pilot schemes have demonstrated that the demand for easily accessible, non-commercial spaces is enormous: these have made apparent that families, those at work during the week and those who live alone in particular will happily congregate in a library on Sunday to spend time there.

It is the social mandate of libraries to ensure that the public has unrestricted access to knowledge and information. However, this is still not fully available to them in digital formats. Therefore, there is still a need for legal regulations relating to the lending of e-books so as to make digital reading available to all. Furthermore, also required are suitable regulations that provide legal certainty for libraries as to how researchers are to be allowed reliable access to the data that is so important to them.

On the following pages you will find out what kind of political support is required for these and other issues that are of particular importance to libraries today.

I hope this report makes for interesting reading!

Volker Heller
Federal Chair of the
German Library Association
(Deutscher Bibliotheksverband e.V.
– dbv)

What the politicians say



The Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs considers libraries to be important educational partners for our schools. Whether they are school libraries or extracurricular educational venues, libraries support our pupils in acquiring key basic skills such as reading and writing. They teach them how to use media and information safely and encourage independent learning. And last but not least, libraries light the touch paper on children's imaginations – for many pupils they are gateways into the wonderful wide world of literature. The rich potential of libraries can be particularly well exploited by extending the concept of all-day schooling; in this context libraries can be used as teaching locations or spaces for free study, as cultural meeting places or as refuges where people can simply read and relax. Libraries can enrich school life and all-day learning in diverse and reliable ways. Therefore, I would like to offer my heartfelt thanks to all those who work for or volunteer at a library!

Katharina Günther-Wünsch
Minister of Education, Youth and Family in the in the Federal State of Berlin; President of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs



Libraries provide a wide range of opportunities. People of all generations and from all backgrounds can pursue their interests and explore new knowledge at the same time. They provide spaces for people to share ideas and socialise, and play an important role in promoting participation in both cultural and societal aspects. In many regions, local libraries are the only easily accessible locations where culture is to be found and are much frequented meeting places for those seeking education and leisure. They provide an extensive range of educational opportunities – from picture book slide shows for the youngest users to discussion groups and courses to improve media skills. As well as their expertise in and dedication to promoting literacy and linking it with the latest techniques, libraries have long been an essential element in the area of cultural learning due to their extensive collaborations with various educational institutions.

Falko Mohrs
State Minister of Lower Saxony for Science and Culture
Chair of the Conference of Culture Ministers (KMK)



Data is a valuable resource that we mine to gain knowledge, ideas and innovations. It is necessary for researchers to have easy access to this information without compromising on data protection. And this is precisely what the Federal Government intends to ensure by adopting a law on research data.

Libraries play a pivotal role in this context. They collect and store data, make it usable and provide support to their users in the form of everything from data management to scientific publication. Libraries are driving the transition to more openness and are helping to ensure that open access publishing continues to establish itself as the standard.

The service provided by libraries are paving the way for a more contemporary approach to data management, and libraries are proving once again that they are the drivers of progress.

Bettina Stark-Watzinger,
Member of the German Bundestag
Federal Minister of Education and Research

Libraries in numbers

Figures from the German Library Statistics for 2022¹

In the whole of Germany, there are **more than 8,850 public and academic libraries**. In 2022, libraries were visited in excess of **132 million times**. Over the year, public libraries alone were open to their users for upwards of **3.9 million hours**.

Range of training courses and events significantly extended

Libraries are important places for cultural and educational events and provide a wide range of programmes for various target groups of all ages. **Approx. 290,000 events and training courses** were hosted by public and academic libraries in 2022. Public libraries organised more than **132,000 events for children to promote reading skills and media literacy**. Some **406,000 individuals** took part in **training courses, guided tours, teaching events and webinars at academic libraries**.

Digital media for academic, research and teaching purposes

It is impossible to imagine the teaching and research professions without digital information. From their total acquisition budget of €363 million, academic libraries invested approx. **€223 million** in the **procurement of e-media** in 2022. **Holdings of e-media** have grown to **around 77 million items**. In comparison, this figure was approx. 63 million in 2021 and 55 million in 2020.

292 million borrowings from public libraries

In 2022, approx. **292 million items** were borrowed from public libraries; around **44 million of those were e-media**. Online programmes are very important for providing the community with media and information, yet the demand for analogue media is still high.

Source: German Library Statistics (DBS). Despite the high participation rate by libraries, the figures recorded for the German Library Statistics (DBS) make no claim to be fully comprehensive as participation is voluntary. In the 2022 reporting year, a total of 8,854 public and academic libraries sent figures to the DBS.

¹The German Library Statistics (DBS) for 2022 are only comparable to a limited extent with those for previous years because of the measures that had to be put in place due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The German Library Association calls for: Library budgets to be adjusted to account for inflation and for infrastructure measures to be prioritised



Libraries play a crucial role when it comes to addressing the major challenges facing our democratic society. So that everyone can take advantage of modern library services, the public authorities must guarantee reliable, needs-orientated funding of personnel, infrastructure and programme offers. At this time, investments in these areas are more important than ever.

With programmes aimed specifically at families, kindergartens and schools, libraries promote literacy, provide verified information to counter fake news and boost media and IT skills. At the same time, they also provide a public meeting place for all users from all generations, demographic groups and backgrounds.

However, new responsibilities and rising costs have been eroding library budgets for years. This is demonstrated by the latest German Library Association survey on the financial situation of public libraries conducted among its members:² 81% of libraries reported that their overall budget was unchanged

or had even decreased. Despite the immense investments necessary to provide digital media as well as printed books, 84% of libraries say that their media budget has flatlined or been reduced. In our post-digital society, in which digitalisation is a natural component of everyday life, 41% of libraries point out that they do not have sufficient funds to provide contemporary digital offerings.

Therefore, the German Library Association is calling on library funding bodies to adjust their institutions' budgets in line with inflation and to gradually increase them to comply with current educational needs. As local governments are currently experiencing severe financial difficulties, we urgently call on the federal government to create additional funding programmes to modernise the infrastructure and to develop and extend the range of digital offerings, which will sustainably secure the future viability of libraries.

Sunday opening hours

The German Library Association calls for: **Public libraries to be legally permitted to open on Sundays**



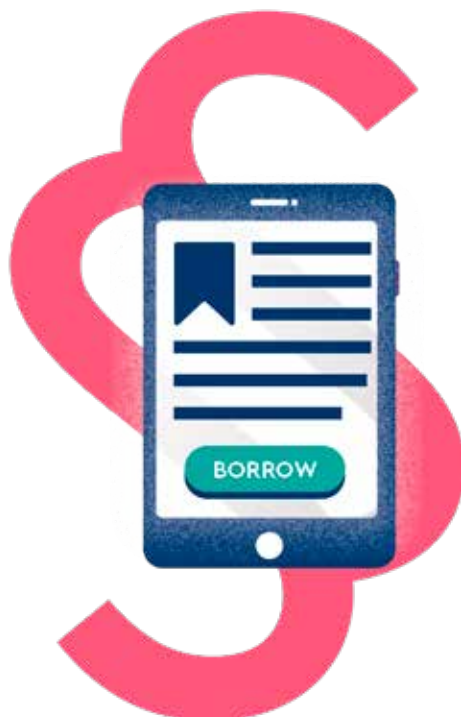
In its coalition agreement, the federal government has committed itself to promote libraries as “third places” and to allow them to open on Sundays. Unlike opera houses, museums and theatres, public libraries do not have the legal right to offer their information services and cultural education opportunities on Sundays. To date, the Federal Ministry of Labour has failed to react.

And this is despite pilot schemes demonstrating that libraries are inundated with visitors on Sundays. Particularly for families, single parents and people in demanding professions, Sunday is often the only day when they have time to take advantage of the wide range of services offered by a library. And despite the increase in digitalisation, the physical spaces offered by libraries are still important. Libraries are becoming increasingly more relevant as places to where everyone can learn and discover, enjoy leisure time and become involved in democratic discourse and social participation.

Through its Bibliotheksstärkungsgesetz (Library Empowerment Act) adopted in October 2019, the federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia has authorised local authorities to open public libraries on Sundays and public holidays and to employ staff on these days for up to six hours. The trade union Ver.di unsuccessfully campaigned against this. However, for libraries there is still a lack of legal certainty: if the other 15 federal states also make state-specific exceptions to the ban on Sunday opening and each of them permit various exemptions, there is a risk of further legal action.

Therefore, the German Library Association is calling on the federal government to now draw up nationally applicable laws and to end the employment ban for public library workers on Sundays and public holidays. This will provide libraries with the option of opening on Sundays and public holidays, but will not necessarily obligate them to do so. After all, whether this is possible depends on the local situation, while adequate availability of personnel and funding are key.

The German Library Association calls for: **E-book lending in libraries to be legally regulated**



Our reading habits are constantly changing. We read more and more texts online or in the form of e-books. However, library users often have to wait for months after a book is published before they can borrow it as an e-book from a library. This is due to an arbitrary delay period set by publishing houses that means that libraries can only loan out new e-book titles up to 12 months after publication. There is an urgent need for legal regulation to allow libraries to purchase e-book licenses on reasonable terms immediately after the corresponding physical books hit the shelves.

In its coalition agreement, the federal government committed itself to "fair framework conditions for e-lending by libraries". To this end, the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media has set up a roundtable of representatives of libraries, publishing houses and authors, and also authorised a survey to provide a cogent information base for creating fairer framework conditions for

e-lending. The results of the survey are expected to be available in early 2024. In parallel, the Federal Ministry of Justice has published a questionnaire in order to determine the need for regulation with regard to copyright law for e-lending in libraries. These are two steps in the right direction, facilitating the access of readers to media in our post-digital age.

Free access to information and sources is a valuable commodity in Germany. It is a right that is anchored in the German constitution and which libraries in particular are pledged to uphold. To ensure that this also comprehensively applies to electronic information and libraries can continue to curate their holdings as they wish, the German Library Association is calling on the federal government to revise the legal framework relating to the borrowing of e-books.

The German Library Association calls for: **Libraries to be systematically provided with the legal rights relating to all-day childcare**



As non-commercial places of extracurricular learning and self-determined leisure activities, libraries offer children and young people a range of opportunities for personal development. In this dual role, they are key partners in the concept of all-day schooling. In order to promote literacy and media skills, libraries must be consistently taken into account when it comes to aspects concerning the legal right to all-day childcare for primary school children.

The reading ability of primary school children has continued to deteriorate. According to the results of the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) 2021, around 25% of fourth graders (10-year-olds) in Germany have inadequate reading skills. Therefore, almost 1 in 4 children cannot read properly when they go to secondary school. By providing access to media, encouraging reading for pleasure and increasing media and IT skills outside of school, libraries complement the related curricular activities. Pupils will become familiar with libraries as safe places that they can visit by themselves.

In order that the concept of all-day schooling takes the most child-suitable form, it is essential that libraries are acknowledged as extracurricular places of study. The federal, state and local governments have a responsibility to ensure that primary school children are cared for by extending the concept of all-day schooling and creating a diverse range of high-quality educational opportunities that provide children with additional options that will complement their school-based learning.

In order to ensure reliable cooperation within the all-day school concept, libraries need to be able to employ additional personnel and receive funding for staff training. The German Library Association is also calling for a joint effort to be made by the federal, state and local governments to develop a modern school library system that provides additional learning space for all pupils and thus ensures greater educational equality.

The German Library Association calls for: The personnel recruitment process to be more flexible, more open and faster



Libraries are the most frequented locations where education and culture are on offer and provide a range of programmes and services for all generations. However, they have been experiencing a shortage of qualified staff for a number of years, partly due to a high number of employees retiring, but also because of stringent administrative regulations. Therefore the Germany Library Association is calling on the state and local governments to modernise the way vacancies in the library sector are advertised and filled.

The responsibilities of libraries and their services have changed significantly over the past few years as they constantly react to technological, societal and academic transformations. More and more, public libraries are becoming "third places" offering high-quality surroundings, an extensive range of analogue and digital media as well as media and IT skills training for all ages. Academic libraries provide researchers, teachers and students with research data and academic publications, promote key digital skills for learners, and support teaching, studying and research with up-to-date services and tools.

These responsibilities lead to new requirements when it comes to the qualifications of staff. Libraries don't just need people with library-related exper-

tise; instead they need them to also have excellent communication and social skills, experience in media literacy, in marketing and in the IT or open science sector. However, the regulations that apply to public services personnel recruitment often do not correspond with the actual requirements of libraries and thus exclude applicants who are changing careers but have special qualifications that are sought after. To support the professional acquirement of personnel by libraries, the library associations have developed strategies and measures to create an overarching employer brand for this changing professional field. On top of this, the administrative authorities need to update the personnel profiles for libraries so that it is possible to target and employ suitable members of staff.

Therefore, the Germany Library Association is calling for state and local governments to ensure that HR management is better informed about the changing nature of library work, take into account the specialist expertise of library administrators, advertise vacancies with more flexible criteria, take career changers into consideration when selecting applicants and speed up the rate at which vacancies are filled.

The German Library Association calls for: The access to data to be legally safeguarded by means of a Research Data Act



Libraries play a crucial role in providing and saving research data as well as making it accessible. As infrastructural facilities, they are experienced in making research data permanently accessible and retrievable, and enriching it with additional services. They provide various services to support academics in managing research data.

When implementing the coalition agreement, the current federal government plans to improve and simplify access to research data for public and private by adopting a Research Data Act. Currently, libraries and other institutions are often confronted with complex legal issues when dealing with research data.

However, when it comes to the subsequent organisational and often also technical requirements for legally compliant access, they and their partners are often left alone and have no clear legal framework on the basis of which to orientate themselves.

The German Library Association believes that the legal regulation of research data must involve the creation of structures for libraries within which they can be legally assured of their role as infrastructural access providers. To ensure this, existing regulations in the areas of data protection and personal rights in particular, as well as with regard to copyright and ancillary rights must be taken into consideration and harmonised where necessary. Conflicting regulations or over-regulation should be avoided. Furthermore, the Germany Library Association is calling for legal regulation of the saving and publication of anonymous research data.

The German Library Association calls for: **Funding programmes to support open access academic publishing for libraries**



Academic libraries play a key role when it comes to the academic publishing process, assisting researchers with their questions regarding possible publication formats and services as well as copyright and usage issues. To enable them to comply with these responsibilities, concrete funding programmes are needed to facilitate the academic open access publishing activities of libraries.

As non-profit, independent educational institutions, libraries are trusted by researchers, publishing houses and the general public alike. They prepare and make data available in a sustainable and long-term form and play an important role in the ongoing open science transformation process. At the same time, they ensure that data is permanently and reliably available for users and researchers. They ensure that search and find options are available for publications and the research data linked to them by actively disseminating this information and creating metadata.

These responsibilities are constantly growing and developing. As outlined in the recommendations on academic publications by the German Science and Humanities Council 2022, it is therefore necessary for libraries to acquire additional expertise.

The German Library Association is calling on the federal government to support libraries in their key role in making the transformation of the academic publishing process a success. Funding programmes such as those run by the German Research Foundation (DFG) and the federal government, as well as joint initiatives by the federal and state governments and the states themselves must aim to promote libraries as places of publication and advice. This includes constantly improving the existing skills of library staff, including their expertise relating to legal issues regarding copyright and data usage. Only then will libraries be able to actually live up to their claim to be independent institutions that comprehensively support and help shape the transformation of academic publishing by academic and non-academic organisations.

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