

LIBRARIES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG ADULTS IN GERMANY





THE MISSION OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN GERMANY

Public libraries provide the public with free access to all kinds of information and media, supplemented with a diverse array of services and events. In addition to offering adult services, there are usually separate areas for children up to the age of approximately 12-years-old. There are also libraries that cater to young adults ages 13-18, but service to this age group is not as common. Specific types of libraries, such as bookmobiles, school libraries, or specialized learning centers often support and complement public library service. Public libraries are open to everyone, regardless of age, sex, income, religion, ethnicity etc.

Libraries in Germany are governed by the cultural policies of the 16 states of the German Federation (established in 1945). There is no Central Library Law that unifies the mission of the public libraries, their facilities or their human resources. Therefore, there is great diversity among the existing libraries, ranging from large Central Libraries that govern an entire library system, down to the small community libraries run by only one person. Public Libraries' materials and personnel budgets are funded by tax money from the respective communities.

LIBRARIES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG ADULTS AMONGST GERMAN LIBRARIES

Children and young adults are among the most important audiences of public libraries. Libraries 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. 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.





LIBRARIES FOR CHILDREN

In general, German children's libraries are aimed at children aged 0-12 and their families, schools, and educators. They all offer a range of current media, while the emphasis tends to lie on print media. Picture books, primary readers, comic books, and non-fiction books are among the most popular and most-circulated media. While e-books have made interesting developments in recent years, most patrons still prefer physical books. But books with digital enhancements are extremely popular. Aside from printed media, CDs, console games, and movies on DVD or Blu-Ray are very well utilized.

In the mornings, children's libraries usually host group visits by 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.

In the afternoons children's libraries are open to the public. Aside from just borrowing media, in recent years, visitors enjoy simply being on the premises of a library, where they read, play, or collaborate on homework assignments.

In many places, while the number of visitors is increasing, circulation numbers for media are stagnating or decreasing. While many individual communities issue library cards free-of-charge to children and students, there is no unified agreement on how this is handled across the German states.

LIBRARIES FOR YOUNG ADULTS

At the end of elementary school, or when children have reached the age of 13, children progress to the young adult library, which holds age-appropriate material. Youth libraries serve children up to the age of 16 or young adults up to the age of 25 – the age limit fluctuates depending on the library. In cases where there are no designated entire libraries for young adults, often libraries will stock a section of the library with materials for young adults. Numerous libraries make use of standardized selections from large library contractors. These contractors provide media packages for young adults, presented in a modular system. In this way, libraries lacking adequate personnel in young adult departments can at least offer materials for this target group. However, adequate school-related non-fiction materials are only available within the adults' section.

Unfortunately, established libraries for young adults are scarce. The needs of this user group differ significantly from those of other library users, and libraries need to provide appropriate, high-quality materials, a dedicated space, and appropriate service from trained library professionals for teenagers and young adults. In order to experience the library as a place that belongs to them, they deserve spaces of their own, where their needs are prioritized.

Libraries for young adults in Germany continually experiment with new paths. At times, these libraries are predominantly headed by trainees, who are closer to the target groups in terms of age and interests. In other cases, libraries rely on the participation of young library users and on networking with other participants in the local youth scene.

ETHICS AND VALUES

Core functions of libraries serving children and young adults are: 1) communicating information and media literacy; 2) promoting reading skills; and 3) creating accessible, low-threshold, and free-of-charge points-of-access to information and media. Democracy, pluralism, and individual self-determination are values that can be imparted via a wide selection of materials in libraries serving children and young adults.



HUMAN RESOURCES - COMPETENCIES AND KNOWLEDGE

Library staff consists predominantly of two professional groups. First there are specially trained employees with expertise in materials and information services. These are chiefly employed in reader services and in material processing. Then there are the librarians, who have studied library and information science (B.A., M.A.) at one of six universities (Hamburg, Berlin, Potsdam, Cologne, Leipzig, and Stuttgart). Leipzig University offers a specialization in youth services.

In recent years the demand for programs in media literacy by kindergartens and schools has risen dramatically. Hence, qualifications in media pedagogy, particularly concerning digital media and devices, have gained in importance. In some libraries a number of proper media pedagogues or media mentors are employed. In this area no established professional profile is yet to be seen; moreover, there is a multitude of very diverse qualifications.

In Germany librarians regularly seek professional development to improve their skillsets. Recently, opportunities for continuing education for staff of children's and young adult libraries have improved. Every third year, the German Library Association (dbv) hosts a multi-day symposium related to the topic of "Children's and Young Adults' Libraries", where, aside from professional exchanges around best practices, there is a specific focus on continuing education.

In order to employ differently qualified staff in the libraries, collaboration is increasing at the forefront. By working with community partners, libraries can efficiently reach their target groups, and at the same time, gain new competencies.

COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT

Nearly all libraries offer a complete range of materials. While print books still play a major role, they are often complemented by other media formats. Digital media has expanded widely during the past three years, and patrons can use their library cards to borrow eBooks or access streaming portals for film and music. Databases or specific options for students are especially valuable, particularly when they can be accessed from home, using a library card. Libraries provide research training for school classes, which empowers students to use these resources in a skillful way.



ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY

In the field, after a recent decline in use, workstations are gaining in importance again. While many pupils have smartphones or tablets at their disposal, they might not have access to a printer or to particular software tools, and once again, these resources are being used at the library. Adequate internet access and reinforced WiFi are just as important for children's and young adults' libraries, as is the availability of conventional workstations.

Makerspaces are becoming ever more popular in children's and young adult libraries. There are numerous opportunities for young people to learn new skills such as programming, making music, creating films, or writing and presenting texts.

DESIGN OF THE SPACE AND PLACE

When designing spaces within libraries, the needs of the target groups are taken into consideration. Because children are small, children's libraries have lower shelves. Inventory is displayed in ways that appeal to young readers. Interior spaces are differentiated to suit a range of visitors, from babies and toddlers, to beginning readers, to preadolescents. Diaper-changing tables, as well as stroller and baby carriage parking are available to ensure that library visits are comfortable. Children's spaces must accommodate everything from lively play zones, to quiet areas. For young adult libraries, this population's growing independence reflects their strong need for a place on their own. The best young adult libraries have flexible furnishings, carefully selected materials, and a wide range of participatory programming.

THE LIBRARY AS A SAFE PLACE

Children's and young adults' libraries are considered safe public places, and libraries take pains to ascertain who frequents them. In some cases, there are restrictions on access, as well as a set of rules which govern use of the library. These rules are in place, according to the library's mission, in order to allow full enjoyment of the space by the target groups. The German Youth Protection Act defines which films or video games may be lent to minors. In cases of media (such as books or comic books) that are not subject to state appraisal, libraries issue age recommendations in order to support parents in their educational responsibility. Where libraries offer internet access to children and/or young adults they make an effort to supply supervision and the requisite access restrictions.

PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES

Collaborations with diverse types of schools have brought about a number of library introductions and training units that support community needs, including teaching in schools. Project days, reading contests, as well as events related to a scholarly context, complement the closely knit cooperation of libraries and schools.

Digital media and tools currently take prominence within communication efforts.

A number of children's libraries do outreach to local schools, and visit classes during school hours. They also participate in parent-teacher conferences in kindergartens and schools, where they present the library programs and advertise for library visits.

Cooperations with school libraries proper are organized quite differently. Some federal states have a specialized school librarian position, who deals with matters related to school libraries, or a different position for performing centralized services for school libraries.

Not only during vacation times do libraries present a cornucopia of events to their visitors: Handicrafts, readings, movies, workshops with varied topics, ranging from robotics and programming, to all sorts of arts and crafts. Within this, both participatory and do-it-yourself activities are very popular. Young adult libraries emphasize participation to their young visitors. In doing so, they offer (depending on their own technical facilities), the chance to become proactive, whether it is in writing workshops, in music making in recording studios, or in workshops dedicated to comic-book-style drawing. In this case, the core mission is participation in the fabric of society, regardless of social status or financial background.

SELECTED LIBRARIES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG ADULTS

STAATSBIBLIOTHEK BERLIN

BERLIN STATE LIBRARY – PRUSSIAN
CULTURAL HERITAGE FOUNDATION

The department for children and young adults of the BSL belong to the expansive special collections pertaining to children's and young adults' literature. They comprise more than 200,000 volumes in their total stocks, which encompass historical and modern children's and young adults' books and magazines, as well as ca. 8,000 volumes of secondary literature. The collection of early German children's books constitutes a focal segment of the collection. About 2,700 of these books are available in digitalized form. Furthermore, original illustrations, picture broadsheets, and placards pertaining to children's and young adults' books are collected here.

<http://staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/die-staatsbibliothek/abteilungen/kinder-und-jugendbuecher>

Contact: kinderbuchabt@sbb.spk-berlin.de





MÜNCHENER STADTBIBLIOTHEK, UPDATE MUNICH MUNICIPAL LIBRARY, UPDATE

update is a program offer of the Munich Municipal Library for Young Adults, with separate departments at two municipal libraries. The stocks with their 38,000 media reflect the individual environment, e.g. by their emphasis on the audiovisual. The focal point consists of creative and active work with leisure and entertainment media. update produces incentives for societal, cultural, and political participation with its annually hosting 200 events and workshops that generate over 6,500 visitors. In this case, the core mission is participation in the fabric of society, regardless of social status or financial background.

www.muenchner-stadtbibliothek.de/info-service/update-jung-erwachsen/

Contact: stb.update@muenchen.de

SCHULBIBLIOTHEKARISCHE ARBEITSSTELLE (SBA)

THE SCHOOL LIBRARY DEPARTMENT OF THE MUNICIPAL LIBRARY IN FRANKFURT/ MAIN

In the last 40 years, the Municipal Library in Frankfurt/Main has stressed professional school library work. It views the school libraries as an indispensable foundation for substantial educational activities. The School Library Department sba organizes and supports more than 100 school libraries, and offers diversified services for all schools in Frankfurt. Furthermore, the sba conceptualizes and organizes manifold activities in reading promotion and media literacy.

www.stadtbuecherei.frankfurt.de/sba

Contact: sba@stadtbuecherei.frankfurt.de



STADTBIBLIOTHEK OLDENBURG, KINDERBIBLIOTHEK

OLDENBURG MUNICIPAL LIBRARY, CHILDREN'S LIBRARY

“When in Oldenburg do as the Oldenburgers“:
Reading Donkey Olbert, the library's mascot,
pedals on his bicycle to the library, just like
Oldenburg's children. Most important is fun in
reading and pleasure with books.

In November of every year more than 2,000 new
books and 200 events attract up to 30,000 visitors
to the KIBUM, Germany's largest non-commercial
fair for children's and young adults' books.

Current numbers:

Stocks: 24,500 media items, Lendings: 160,000,

Visitors: 69,800, Events: 120

www.stadtbibliothek-oldenburg.de

Contact: kinderbibliothek@stadt-oldenburg.de





STADTBIBLIOTHEK BRILON BRILON MUNICIPAL LIBRARY

Brilon is a middle-sized town in eastern North Rhine-Westphalia. Since the middle of the 1990s the Brilon Municipal Library has put the emphasis on offers for families, children, and young adults. Service, consulting, and an intensive event work are at the forefront. Reading promotion, media instruction, gaming, and informational competency have become the focus of work. The library attains 134,000 lendings annually with a stock of 36,000 media. About 70,000 people visit the library per year. More than 90% of the approx. 300 events have children and young adults as their target group. Innovative formats characterize the event work put forth by the little library in the Sauerland region. At all times human beings are at the center of attention: be it with the Summer Reading Club, the Brilon Book Babies, the Birthday Box Offer, the Games Tester, the Children's University, or the Children Enterprise Visits.

www.stadtbibliothek-brilon.de

Contact: info@stadtbibliothek-brilon.de



INTERNATIONALE JUGENDBIBLIOTHEK MÜNCHEN (IJB)

MUNICH INTERNATIONAL LIBRARY FOR YOUNG ADULTS

The Munich International Library for Young Adults (IJB) is the largest library of its kind in the world and is an internationally recognized center for literature for children and young adults from all over the world. Its collection consists of more than 600,000 children's and young adults' books in over 130 languages from four centuries. Every year ca. 300 events, guided tours, and workshops as well as varying exhibitions reach up to 50,000 visitors. Thereby, it makes an important contribution in safeguarding, documenting, and communicating books for children and young adults as an essential part of cultural diversity.

For the international public there are a scholarship programs, touring exhibitions, and recommendation catalogs in English.

www.ijb.de

Contact: info@ijb.de

STADT- UND SCHULBIBLIOTHEK KELSTERBACH

KELSTERBACH MUNICIPAL AND SCHOOL LIBRARY

The Kelsterbach Municipal and School Library fulfills the city's cultural mission for children, aside from emphasizing school and the family library. The offer comprises an open artistic workshop, children's cinema, a series of events for toddlers starting at 18 months, as well as proffering many events in media pedagogy for children up to the age of 15. The library is a popular meeting place for over 77,000 visitors annually, and offers spaces for games and learning. The multi-faceted offer of the library, with its 170 events, its 37,000 media, and 80,000 lendings, is well-accepted by all age groups.

www.stadtbibliothek-kelsterbach.de

Contact: stadtbibliothek@kelsterbach.de





ZENTRAL- UND LANDESBIBLIOTHEK (ZLB) BERLIN CENTRAL AND REGIONAL LIBRARY

The Library for Children and Young Adults with the Learning Center of the Berlin Central and Regional Library, the largest public library for children and young adults in Germany, offers differentiated holdings reaching back to the 1950s. Reading promotion and the communication of media and informational competency are the focus of an integrated concept. The event and service offers range from library introductions, homework assistance and learning advice to theater performances, readings, and variegated workshops.

Stocks: 150,000 media for children and young adults
Lendings: 518,000, Visitors: 189,000,
Events: 690 events with 10,900 visitors

www.zlb.de/kijubi/portal

Contact: jubi@zlb.de

NOTES

IMPRESSUM

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