

**Study Tour of German Parliaments and Other Research Institution Libraries
October 2007**

Report and Observations

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What a surprise and honor I had when, in March 2007, I was notified that I was selected to join nine other U.S. librarians on a library and research institutions tour of Germany. All summer long I mentally planned for the October event and attempted to learn as much as possible in advance about each place we would visit. I suggested to Curtis Rogers from the South Carolina State Library that the group should have a pre-trip blog so that we could share information and become acquainted with one another. Since I did not know how to set up and run a blog, he was able to accomplish that beginning in May 2007. The blog still continues at: <http://germanylibtour.wordpress.com/>

My arrival was actually two days before the group arrival for I had International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) business to discuss with Dr. Gundula Felten, director of the Federal Foreign Office library.

The Berlin highlights for me included the Deutscher Bundestag, the Stasi Archiv, and the Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik. The staff of the Deutscher Bundestag went out of their way to prepare a wonderful presentation for us, they gave us tours and we enjoyed a breakfast atop the Bundestag with American and German colleagues. This type of diverse networking was invaluable and we all learned much from our casual discussions with those seated closest to us. Like others, I felt like I was in the presence of real friends who enjoyed their work and took an interest in the work we did. Two lasting impressions stick with me today – the incredible moving Hannah Arendt quote that ran around the ceiling perimeter of the Deutscher Bundestag Library and the haunting Russian graffiti on the interior walls of the Reichstag. What stories they told!

I am sure I am not alone when I say that I could have spent two days at the Stasi Archiv listening to the staff tell their stories of intrigue and mystery. The director was quite lively and loved sharing his work with us. We all wish that we spoke German well enough to be able to poke through the secretive materials. Upon my return to the States, I rented the movie *The Lives of Others* so that I could live the experience once again and fill in the information gaps I had after that incredible visit.

Finally, I was really interested in the type of work being done by the researchers and analysts at the Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP), (German Institute for

International and Security Affairs) as it closely resembles the kind of work we do at the Congressional Research Service at the Library of Congress. Like the SWP we are a bipartisan think tank for the U.S. Congress and address some of the same issues.

The trip to Hamburg and the Parliament of the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg was fascinating. It was interesting to compare what we learned about the legislative process and procedure at the national level in Berlin with that of a länder parliament. The differences in the operations, interests and needs of other länder followed with visits to Saxony and Bavaria. I always found that I had more questions after we left one of the länder parliaments that were not asked during our meetings. Some of those questions have since been answered by reading the informative booklets provided to us.

Although it was not a parliamentary library, I enjoyed the visit to the Deutsches Patent-und Markenamt. One tidbit of information I found fascinating was that after World War II all of the German Patent and Trademark Office records were taken by the precursor of the National Security Agency of the U.S. so that they could search for and examine weapons and technology patents. In a kind gesture, the U.S. government returned all of the records back to Germany preserved as microfilm.

It was interesting to learn about and then to observe first-hand the efforts of the German government to provide for direct or indirect outside light and art in office buildings. Such a construction law certainly helps to make a more satisfied worker and the idea of public art in government buildings and other offices is very forward thinking. The U.S. Government and architects, in general, could learn a lesson from this.

Personally, I left with the impression that German librarians are more secure in their positions and that there is less consolidation and outright closure of federal libraries than in the U.S. American librarians are forever defending their positions, their services, their budgets and in spite of this, many are closed including government libraries. Because of this American librarians have learned to market their libraries and services in a big way and it never ends. I did not get the impression that German government librarians have to market their services as much or to defend their positions like we have to do in the U. S.

It was also enlightening for me to learn that the Sächsischer Landestag and the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek have combined their parliamentary libraries with those of local universities. The latter even had a joint program whereby library science students could earn a diploma that would qualify them for employment in a German library as a civil servant. These are very progressive, successful joint ventures and should ensure the long-term viability and visibility of these two parliamentary libraries. As an aside, for two weeks in December of 2007 I worked with the House Democracy Assistance Commission on a joint U.S. Congress and Congressional Research Service program to train members of parliaments and their research/library staff from eight countries. One of those countries, Mongolia, stated that they were trying to figure out how they could successfully join their parliamentary library (<http://www.parl.gov.mn>) with that of a local

university. I was able to provide them with the two German models that I knew of in Dresden and Munich as well as to give them contact information so that they might be able to make official fact finding visits. I would not have been able to do this without having had this study tour opportunity.

From within the group, I acquired the name “The Gift Giver”. I had great fun with the many thank you gifts that I carefully purchased before my trip knowing that there would be many people to thank along the way with a little token of American appreciation. Here I am presenting a Library of Congress 2008 calendar to Dr. Ines Mockenhaupt-Gordon, Head, Library and Documentation Department at the Deutscher Bundestag and a Library of Congress paperweight with the Thomas Jefferson quote, “I cannot live without books” on it to Ms. Ursula Freyschmidt, head of the Deutscher Bundestag Parliament Library.



A few days later I to Nele Morkel, Institute for Affairs in Berlin.



presented a thank you gift Librarian at the German International and Security

In Hamburg, I presented a special greeting from Sophie and Sheba, my two Bichon Frises. The staff at the Hamburg Parliament library have watched them grow up since they were a special from my



babies and I wanted to leave them with photographic greeting *auf Deutsch* two canine girls.



In Munich we were entertained by Peter Weber, librarian at the Max Planck Institute for Intellectual Property, Competition and Tax Law. As a thank you for his time and presentation, I presented Mr. Weber with Library of Congress and Congressional Research Service gifts. It was also an exciting day to be at the Max Planck Institute for two of their staff had just won the Nobel Prize that day. What an honor for them and an added bonus for us to have been there on that momentous day. Throughout the trip I left Congressional Research Service pens with the many librarians that we met.

Finally, during a farewell dinner, Donna Scheeder and I prepared and presented some fun farewell gift certificates to each person in this fabulous group.



I am ever so grateful to the Initiative Fortbildung für wissenschaftliche Spezialbibliotheken und verwandte Einrichtungen e. V. and the Checkpoint Charlie Foundation for granting me this once in a lifetime opportunity. Not only have I made lasting friendships with the U.S. colleagues with whom I traveled but I have widened my library network to include many wonderful German librarians. The travel and the programs coordinated by Evelin Morgenstern with the escorting and translation assistance of Christine Wellem's were first-rate. I only hope that when I reach Evelin's young age that I will have as much energy and enthusiasm as she exhibited as she dealt with the day-to-day rigors of travel arrangements, housing, meals, entertainment and humorous moments of such a group of travelers.

IF I had to make any changes to the program those changes might include:

- a. Ending each day a little earlier so that participants have time to rest and recover between the last appointment of the day and a group dinner. Some people want to shop before dinner but in our case had no time and after dinner businesses were closed. Others just wanted to drop off their things in hotel, cleanup a bit, then head out for a group dinner. Others needed to check office email back home but had little opportunity.
- b. Although I loved it immensely, the visits to Karlsruhe and Strasbourg could be dropped so that more time could be spent in Berlin, Dresden and perhaps add nearby Thuringia. This would alleviate many hours spent on train travel. We might have benefited from a visit to the Staatsbibliothek in Berlin, for example, so that one could learn how the state library in the capital city interacts with the various national libraries. However, I did find the Federal Court of Justice and Dietrich Pannier and Marcus to be two of the friendliest and most knowledgeable people we met. The European Court of Human Rights was also a highlight but some participants felt it could have been left out since it was more French/European than German.

- c. Spend a few hours visiting the Federal Foreign Office Library. We did visit the archives but the actual Federal Foreign Office Library located in the newer building is quite stunning and they have some interesting programs they are doing for their staff.

It is my sincere hope that I will be able to reciprocate and someday be involved with a similar exchange of German librarians to Washington, D.C.