

Marketing in Museum Libraries – past, present and future – the example of the Library of the Hamburger Kunsthalle

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With a message from Dr. Stefan Brandt, Managing Director of the Hamburger Kunsthalle

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1. Introduction

As you can see, I am not Dr. Stefan Brandt, the Managing Director of the Hamburger Kunsthalle, who originally wanted to deliver this talk, but unfortunately had to cancel his participation at very short notice due to official commitments which needed his urgent attention. The welcoming address he prepared will however be my starting point. My text, which I will present after that, will pick up on some of the aspects he mentions and go into them in greater detail from the perspective of a librarian.

2. Welcoming address of Dr. Stefan Brandt, Managing Director of the Hamburger Kunsthalle

A typical situation: it is Friday, and on Sunday I have to give a welcoming address for the opening of an exhibition in the Kunsthalle. As far as possible, it should not only be concise and to the point, but also fit the occasion. In the last few days various other things have cropped up which needed dealing with, so that I haven't had a chance to put down a single word on paper. I google the topic in the internet and it is clear to me: what I absolutely must have is Fritz Schumacher's *Conversations with Myself* from 1949, which will probably give

me the keynote quotation for my speech. Where can I find the book at such short notice? I ask in the library of the Kunsthalle, which has about 190,000 volumes in its inventory and – thank God! – they have it in stock. 10 minutes later it is lying on my desk, I find my quote and can write the speech. It was a close shave, but thanks to the library everything worked out in the nick of time ...

This little example shows just one of the many facets which make museum libraries so valuable for those who work there, visitors, students, teachers and the general public: they are a repository of knowledge on specific topics which is often not available in digitalized form – and, this is the point, probably won't be in the foreseeable future. They are “on board” *in the museum*, so that they give us the scientific background for the ongoing process of understanding the works of art, they are one of the prerequisites for putting into practice the four guiding principles of work in museums: Collecting, Preserving, Researching and Communicating. But - as a “crossbreed” between an institution in the spirit of scientific research and an adjunct of a cultural establishment, neither one thing nor the other - museum libraries are faced to a particular degree with changing expectations and ideas of how they should be used. On the one hand, of course, the digital revolution has long since reached them too, but in the shadow of the “big” libraries, they often have no access to the funding sources which are needed to switch over to the new technologies in the first place. On the other, the perception of art museums and their collections is changing at a breathtaking pace. The unquestioned attitude which prevailed for decades, at least in middle-class circles, that regular visits to museums are a firmly established part of a sound humanist education, is more and more disappearing. The view that a library is simply a normal part of a well-run museum, that it is in particular indispensable for the communication of knowledge in connection with the experience of artworks, is by no means shared unreservedly by everyone any more, on the contrary. We have to realize that museums have to fight to hold their own among all the different offerings competing for attention in culture and, increasingly, in entertainment and, if they want to remain competitive, have to meet the requirements posed by new forms of reception which focus more on having an “experience”. But in this changing world, where will museum libraries find their niche in future?

Some aspects of the answer are obvious. A museum library will still be needed in future to supply the people who work in a museum with valuable information. And there will still in future be a public consisting of specialists, usually academics and researchers, who frequent the museum libraries. But: the truth is that, when decisions are made about where to allocate funds from an already very meagre budget within the museum, those responsible of course look to see if a section has 100,000 or only 1,000 visitors per year. And in these deliberations, museum libraries rarely have the best cards. In contrast to many others, I am personally firmly convinced that museum libraries represent an enrichment for any museum

and will continue to have their justification. But at the same time I believe that those in charge of libraries and museums will have to ask themselves a number of sometimes rather awkward questions if they want to transcend the status quo of merely managing a deficit:

1. How can we find a way to take the step up from a work ethos which is tailored to preserving printed books and magazines to the digitalization of text? What should our criteria be, for instance, when deciding what periodicals and series should be switched over to digital access? Which books can be kept in future as e-books? In what areas will we want to stay with print media in future?
2. How can funds for support be generated so that we can master the task of digitalization technically? Are cooperation agreements with other specialist or museum libraries a possible solution in order to achieve greater “critical mass”?
3. What applications and services could libraries offer which we haven’t thought of up to now, in order to gain even more users?
4. How can we manage to integrate the museum libraries more closely into the other activities of the museums which are geared to contact with the public - and so to make them into a more fulfilling “experience”?
5. How can we continue to devise and realize innovative concepts which successfully increase the *reach and relevance* of museum libraries against the background of shrinking marketing budgets? What role do fund-raising and sponsoring have to play here?
6. What international success stories can we find of libraries which have successfully negotiated the leap into a new digitalized, more “experience-generating” world for museums? What can others learn from them and how can we organize the exchange of *best practices* in a sensible way?

As you can see, I still have many more questions than answers. That is why I hope that your conference may be able to identify possible long-term perspectives for solutions. I very much regret that I can’t be there personally this time, but I await the results of your discussions with the greatest interest.

I wish you exhilarating and stimulating days in Berlin and send you my warmest greetings

Stefan Brandt

Hamburg, May 2013

3. Why were museum libraries set up in the first place and what was their function?

The answer to this question, which was the first one Dr. Brandt asked me, is not as obvious or easy as it might seem, since there has been no comprehensive scientific investigation into the matter¹. On top of that, the marketing aspect which is so evident to us today was simply not seen and the question as to the “why” not asked in the past. When I sent a questionnaire around to the librarians on the mailing list of the AKMB, I received many answers from colleagues stating that they had just never really thought about it. A library was necessary and there was one, and that was the end of it.

Nevertheless, we can say a little more about the origins of libraries in museums². From the very beginning, libraries and museums were closely knit together, if we just think of the study rooms (*studioli*) of princes and scholars, which were always more than purely a collection of books. It was from them that the curiosity cabinets (*Kunst- und Wunderkammern*) arose, which reflected the changing perceptions of the age in their macro- and microcosm. Over time, the *Kunst- und Wunderkammern* developed into museums or, where the collections of books were more extensive, into a library with special collections.³ The example of the British

¹ The only essays in German are: Albert Schramm: *Die deutschen Museumsbibliotheken*. In: *Zentralblatt für Bibliothekswesen*. 44 (1927), p. 517; Monika Steffens: *Museumsbibliothek – ein Blick hinter den Spiegel*. *Notizen zu einer verborgenen Einrichtung*, In: *AKMB-news* 1 (1995) 2, pp. 5-9 and Joachim Brand: *Museumsbibliotheken*, In: *Museen zwischen Qualität und Relevanz*. Berlin, 2012, pp. 401-411. Besides these, there are a few descriptions of individual libraries, e.g. Manuela Hartung: *Die Bibliothek Archäologie: Eine historische Bibliothek – modern aufgestellt*. In: *Neue Ausgrabungen und Funde in Thüringen*. (2012-2013) 7, pp. 229-232; Elke Purpus: *Die Kunst- und Museumsbibliothek der Stadt Köln. Geschichte der Bibliothek und des Fotoarchivs*. Essen 2007; Michael Wenzel: *Die Bibliothek des Herzoglichen Kunst- und Naturalienkabinetts im 18. Jahrhundert*. In: *250 Jahre Museum / Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum Braunschweig, Kunstmuseum des Landes Niedersachsen. Von den fürstlichen Sammlungen zum Museum der Aufklärung*. München 2004, pp. 70-79; Sigrun Rieger: *Die Bibliothek des Bayerischen Nationalmuseums*. In: *AKMB-News* 13 (2007) 1, pp. 33-42; Joachim Brand: *Zur Geschichte der Bibliotheken der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz*. In: *Bibliothek und Wissenschaft*. 37 (2004), pp. 120-153; Helmut Hilz: *Bücherschätze des Deutschen Museums. Deutschlands Forschungsbibliothek für Naturwissenschafts- und Technikgeschichte*. In: *Bibliotheksforum Bayern*. 31 (2003) 1, pp. 3-25; Sabine Müller-Wirth: *Eine Bibliothek der Kunst gewidmet. Die planvoll angelegte Sammlung der Markgräfin Caroline Luise von Baden (1723-1783) entwickelt sich zur modernen Kunst- und Museumsbibliothek in Karlsruhe*. In: *Jahrbuch der Staatlichen Kunstsammlungen in Baden-Württemberg*. 38 (2001), pp. 65-88; Eberhard Slensczka: *Die Bibliothek des Germanischen Nationalmuseums in Nürnberg*. In: *Bibliotheksforum Bayern*. (1988) 2, pp. 146-153; Gisela Schulz: *Zur Geschichte der Museumsbibliothek*. In: *Jahrbuch des Museums für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg*. 3 (1984), pp. 313-326; Ulrich Weisner: *Die Bibliothek der Kunsthalle Bielefeld und ihre Aufgaben*. In: *ABI-Technik*. 4 (1984) 2, pp. 127-128. Outside Germany, the literature is more extensive, but often only intended for purely practical purposes, e.g. Christine Milne (ed.): *Displays and exhibitions in art libraries*. [London 2009]; Joan Benedetti (ed.): *Art museums libraries and librarianship*. Lanham, Md. [et al.] 2007; Terry L. Wilson: *The twenty-first century art librarian*. Binghamton, NY 2003; Nicole Picot (ed.): *Arts en bibliothèque*. Paris 2003; Esther Green Bierbaum. *Museum librarianship. A guide to the provision and management of information services*. New York, NC [et al.] 1994; John Larson: *Museum librarianship*. Hamden, Conn. 1985; Philip Pacey (ed.): *A reader in art librarianship*. München [et al.] 1985.

² There is a great deal of literature on the origins of the early collections in the Modern period. A good overview can be found in: Enderle, Wolfgang: *Bibliotheken und die Genese der Sammlungskultur in der Frühen Neuzeit*. In: 101. *Deutscher Bibliothekartag in Hamburg 2012 : Bibliotheken: Tore zur Welt des Wissens*. – Hildesheim, 2013, pp. 303-315.

³ Kaspar Friedrich Jencquel: *Museographia oder Anleitung zum rechten Begriff und nützlicher Anlegung der Museorum oder Raritäten-Kammern*. (...) Im dritten Theile (...) von Bibliotheken (...)

Museum, which was opened in 1759 as a universal museum and library, shows that there were also collections where the museum and the library remained partners on equal terms.

It was especially in the 19th century that museum libraries were set up as research institutes. Towards the end of the 19th century, a third, new function of museum libraries emerges. In the wake of the Arts & Crafts movement, the museum library took on the role of an institution open to the wider public which had the task of educating people⁴. Alfred Lichtwark, the first Director of the Hamburger Kunsthalle, made education into the focus of his entire museum activities, underscored it in his theoretical writings and thus brought into existence the concept of the museum educational service.

The library of the Hamburger Kunsthalle had three functions from the very outset. As a part of the collection in the Kupferstichkabinett it belonged to the initial collection when the museum was set up. The Kupferstichkabinett together with the library still form one of the departments of the museum till the present day, and have a shared study room. Alfred Lichtwark expanded the library into a research library for his own museum. When Hamburg University was founded in 1919, the library also took over the function of the institute library for the Kunstgeschichtliche Seminar, the Faculty of Art History, which had its rooms in the Kunsthalle – well into the 1960s, in fact. At the same time the Study Room was open to all citizens of Hamburg and the library played a vital role in Alfred Lichtwark's education activities. At the end of the 19th century, he was already thinking in terms of what the users of the library needed⁵.

In 1887 he wrote, in a short essay "On the Organization of the Hamburger Kunsthalle" about its tasks. "It will be necessary to add an art library to the Cabinet. In any event we need a comprehensive reserve shelf of books, which should also be available to the public at any time in the reading room. It is a natural consequence of this that it will expand into a special library, (...) With a population so given to travelling as ours is, I believe it is also very important to develop another facility we are planning, which I would like to call the travel shelf. The Kunsthalle must be able to make available to everyone who is preparing to travel to Berlin or Dresden or Paris, or even just to Lübeck or Lüneburg, the ways and means for this. He must be able to see the photographs and paintings in our museum and, very

Leipzig 1727; Franz Georg Kaltwasser: Die gemeinsamen Wurzeln von Bibliothek und Museum im 16. Jahrhundert. Dargestellt vorzüglich am Beispiel Münchens. In: Bibliotheken im Kontext von Kulturinstitutionen. Wiesbaden 2003, pp. 57-82.

⁴ Brand l.c., p. 403

⁵ The Library of the Hamburger Kunsthalle has decided in favour of using the term "user" instead of "customer".

necessary as it seems to me, the buildings which he should visit; and the library of the Kunsthalle should offer him the books he needs to prepare himself for the journey.”⁶

Numerous travel guides and picture books were acquired for the travel preparations of the citizens of Hamburg, and these are among the rarities in the library's collection.

4. What does the landscape of museum libraries in Germany look like today? How many of them are there and which are the Top 5?

Unfortunately there are very few statistics available on the museum libraries in Germany. The recently updated Hamburg guide “Bibliotheken in Hamburgs Museen” by itself has 17 entries. In the case of most museum libraries we are talking about one person libraries (OPLs). Only a very limited contingent of their time can be devoted to marketing and public relations.

The many and varied tasks of a museum library, the different roles it can play, mean that my managing director's question as to the Top 5 admits of no easy or quick answer. What do we mean by “Top”? What are the criteria for deciding whether a library is excellent? Is it the collection of books? Its size? The financial or human resources available? The services it offers? The number of local users? These questions were also put on the agenda by the AKMB, which set up its own special interest group to develop a quality management system. The “Standards for art and museum libraries”⁷ lays down a checklist of 83 different requirements, to be examined by two colleagues in an audit. If all the Standards are fulfilled, the library receives a certificate from the Humboldt-Universität in Berlin, which is valid for three years. It was discussed at length in the special interest group whether certain requirements were of such eminent importance that their fulfilment was indispensable for certification. It was decided against acting in this way, so that all the areas of library work are now treated as having equal status. The size of a library should also not play a role. It was decided not to have a multi-layered system. There should be a level playing field so that all the Standards should be able to be fulfilled by all libraries.

In the area of communication and marketing, the following standards were stipulated:

“5.1 Communication and Marketing

The library has a documented concept, fixed in writing, which sets out guidelines for the presentation of what services and other activities it offers to its responsible governing body, what its target groups are, what the national and international specialist public is as well as

⁶ Alfred Lichtwark: Zur Organisation der Hamburger Kunsthalle. Hamburg 1887, pp. 9, 13-14

⁷ http://www.akmb.de/web/pdf/Standards_Version%20IV.pdf, last visit: 29.05.2013

the general public. It should contain a clear allocation of responsibilities e.g., for the planning, implementation and evaluation of measures taken, the creation of the marketing material and media, contacts to the press, lobbying activities. It should be revised annually on the basis of its evaluation.

5.2

The library carries out a poll at least every three years to determine its degree of name recognition as well as the needs and wishes of its customers. The poll is carried out at two different times (seasonal factors) using a prescribed method (see Checklist for Poll, Enclosure 3). The contents and methods of the polls are to be comparable over a longer period of time. The results of the evaluation are documented and used to adapt and improve the services and activities.

5.3

The image of the library is determined at least every three years in a survey (e.g. using a polarity profile) of customers as well as all staff of the library. In the case of not yet customers and non-customers, the image is determined using the same method with a random selection of the potential target groups

5.4

The library has a documented corporate design for all its material and media (e. g. logo, signet, typefaces, colours, formats, layout, online media, signage and guidance systems, standardized identifying features for the museum staff) which is agreed with its sponsor organization/responsible governing body.

5.5

The library has a documented concept for the language style and formulations of all its means of communication. This includes standard formulations (e.g. greetings, wordings for positive and negative information, order requests, text modules, stylistic examples).

5.6

The library's services are published in the media of the responsible governing body (e.g. print material, press releases, intranet, homepage, social media, wiki, blogs, s. checklist Intra- and Internet sites, Enclosure 4).

5.7

The library informs the staff of the responsible governing body directly once a month (e.g. in a newsletter, by email, letter) about current developments and new acquisitions, scheduled events and special events.”

5. How is marketing done in German museum libraries today, with a focus on the Library of the Hamburger Kunsthalle?

The term “marketing” is used here to denote the dominance of customer focus in the work of an institution. That is at any rate how it is defined by “Gabler’s Wirtschaftslexikon”⁸, and the “Bibliotheksportal” of the Deutsche Bibliotheksverband speaks of “market-driven product development”⁹. According to this definition, it must be the first priority to decide what services a library offers with reference to the needs of its users.

In the Hamburger Kunsthalle, education has always traditionally been at the centre of what we do as a museum. In 1998, the museums in Hamburg were converted into public law foundations. Since then the museums themselves have been responsible for their programme, their focus and their funding. The funds which flow into the museum from public sources, however, now only account for some 56% of the overall budget of the Kunsthalle. The remaining 44% make the Hamburger Kunsthalle one of the museums with the highest proportion of self-financing in Germany. This also has an impact on the library, as we heard in the welcoming address. Its work is constantly being compared with that of the other departments of the museum. As a department with only very little direct income and a low visitor rate, it is permanently under pressure to justify its existence.

The focus was placed for the first time on marketing and public relations activities when candidates were invited to apply for the position of manager of the library 11 years ago. Since then the services have undergone considerable change. The spectrum of services on offer was expanded and consists today of the following:

“Library Collections

Types of Publications:

Books

Magazines

Illustrated books / Artists’ books

⁸ <http://wirtschaftslexikon.gabler.de/Definition/marketing.html>, last visit: 29.05.2013

⁹ <http://www.bibliotheksportal.de/themen/management/einfuehrung-bibliotheksmanagement/marketing.html>, last visit: 29.05.2013

Miniatures / Anthologies

New media (Videos, CDs, CD-ROMs, DVDs)

Electronic resources

Special collections (archives of artists, collectors and researchers, the archive of the publications of the Hamburger Kunsthalle, Press archive, collection of reproductions)

Availability of the collections

Open access:

OPAC (monographs and catalogues, magazines, essays, new media, electronic resources)

Other library catalogues with the collection of the library

Only internet access:

Database on the exhibitions of the Hamburger Kunsthalle

Database on the booklets in the library

Press archive with keyword search

Only in the Study room:

Card index catalogue organized alphabetically and by themes

Card index archive

Reserve shelf compilations for exhibitions

Further services offered by the library

For use in the Study Room:

Reserve shelf for readers

Connection for laptops

WLAN (coming soon)

Use of photocopier at low charge

Information and Advice (personally, by telephone or in writing):

Forwarding of copies for a small charge

Ordering publications via interlibrary loan (for the museum staff)

Events:

Use of the library for groups by prior agreement

Introduction to the library, for general use, for target groups (e.g. own staff, students and school classes) as well as individual users

Introduction to the library focussed on specific themes, customized for individual target groups (e.g. students and school classes)

Introduction to researching information in art history (also outside the library collections)

Seminars on specific topics for the Freundeskreise des Museums (sponsor groups) and for the Education Department (Bildung und Vermittlung)

Events geared to particular days or occasions (e.g. the “Long Night of the Museums”, Action week, “Meeting Point: Library” (“Treffpunkt Bibliothek“))

Exhibitions / Items on loan:

In the Study Room

In the Museum

In exhibitions in outside museums

Information about the Library:

The Library website pages

The Library Intranet pages

Monthly Newsletter “WissensWert“ („Worth Knowing“)¹⁰

Many of the services listed here can of course be found in other museum libraries. The ways a library presents itself to the public, however, may differ considerably. The services should be specifically tailored to the individual museum in question and what it offers. In the library of the Kunst- und Ausstellungshalle der Bundesrepublik Deutschland in Bonn, for instance, they have developed their own format. For most of the exhibitions in the museum, a “studiolo“ is set up which gives access to the reserve shelf and further information directly in the area of the rooms in which the exhibition takes place.

But to get back to the Hamburger Kunsthalle: how is the decision made to fix what services to offer? We carry out regular surveys every two years to determine the internal image of the library, using a polarity profile. All the staff of the Hamburger Kunsthalle are asked. The way the library is characterized, i.e. in terms of the three most frequently ticked attributes (boxes), is published in the header of the “WissensWert“ newsletter¹¹.

Cooperation in marketing and public relations is an important aspect. “United we stand“ is our motto outside the walls of the museum too, in general with the other museum libraries in Hamburg. The museum libraries present themselves to the public together in many areas. There is an electronic catalogue of the Hamburg museum libraries¹². Similar projects also exist in Frankfurt and Düsseldorf. I have already mentioned the brochure “Libraries in Hamburg’s Museums“, funded in large part by the Hamburg Department of Culture.

¹⁰ http://www.kulturkurier.de/newsletter_last_8940.html

¹¹ The current attributes are the terms “qualified, cooperative, reliable“.

¹² <https://kataloge.uni-hamburg.de/DB=3/LNG=DU/>, last visit: 29.05.2013

6. What are the problems facing the museum libraries today, and how are we getting to grips with them?

In times when funding is scarce, our Managing Director speaks in terms of whether the library can be kept open at all¹³. In a situation like this, the library must more than ever consider how to position itself. Scant resources on the one hand – an expanded spectrum of activities on the other. Where the digital revolution will take us in the end is not yet apparent today. The research library is becoming an information hub/center which shows how to get to the information people need, along mostly still very complicated paths at the moment, wherever this information may be located. The whole idea of “use” needs to be redefined. Customer contact no longer only takes place in the Study Room inside the building, but on many levels, including the electronic ones. The information service of a library and the processing of information are taking on new significance. The museum library is turning into an information and service center, which makes information available from its collections, electronic resources, the museum documentation and the museum archives. Over and above this, such centers should be so welcoming that they invite every museum visitor to linger and to browse through the information and learn more about the contents of the museum.

At the same time the role of the museum libraries as an integral part of the collections is becoming more important. Thomas Rosemann, librarian at the Kunsthaus in Zurich, writes in the mailing list of the AKMB¹⁴: “In our library in Zurich a tendency is also becoming apparent, however, for users to come first and foremost because they want to use works which are rare. Rare works are also ordered on interlibrary loan with us, which is not surprising. What I want to say with this is that the aspect of the archive is becoming increasingly important: That also fits well with the idea of a museum, where in general almost nothing gets thrown away.” The librarians should pay more attention to these rare collections. They must know what treasures they guard. Only in this way can they place them so as to draw attention to them and encourage their use, research and propagation. Cooperation with the museum documentation service and with the archives can help to reveal the library’s own collection in a quite new light.

¹³ Quote from the abstract of his talk: “Under the pressure of declining public contributions in Germany, the activities of museum management are mostly limited to the aim of maintaining a budget that allows keeping the museum libraries open at all.”

¹⁴ Quoted from the answering mail dated 13th May 2013 to a question first asked by our managing director about the role of museum libraries.

When resources are scarce, it is a good idea to plan for the multiple uses of them and to do everything to make it possible. In the Hamburger Kunsthalle, for example, there will be an exhibition of graphic works by the British Land Art artist Richard Long (*1945) in the near future. The library has a wonderful collection of artists' books by him. We suggested holding an exhibition of the books in the display cases in the Study Room. Visitors will be directed to this in the main exhibition. The texts for the display cases can, with only a little modification, be used for an article in the library's newsletter, for tips in blogs and on Facebook. In the ideal case, this thematic processing of a topic can also be used for an introductory guided tour, perhaps for a seminar for the Friends of the Kunsthalle or in the course programme of the Education Department. Through making use of such a broadly spread network, the museum library can expand the circle of its users and be more visible to the public while at the same time minimizing the work necessary.

The challenges facing museum libraries in the future demand from (us) librarians that we be far-sighted, open for change, and willing to dare the balancing act between tight resources and the increasing demands placed on us. Knowing what the users need is an indispensable prerequisite for a flexible and creative response to a world which is transforming the parameters of our work almost out of recognition.