

A way to evaluate the work of librarians in art and museum libraries in German-speaking countries : The procedure of the “Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Kunst- und Museumsbibliotheken” (AKMB – Working Group of Art and Museum Libraries)

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Abstract

The paper describes the certification procedure, developed by members of the AKMB and supported by external experts, presents the first experiences while implementing the procedure and can be seen as a starting point for the exchange of information concerning similar projects or for the establishment of an international project.

The Working Group of Art and Museum Libraries (AKMB)

The AKMB was founded in 1995 to enable the exchange of information and experience, to provide education and training as well as to represent the interests of this special type of library. At the end of 2008 the working group comprises 172 institutional, 62 personal members and 25 subscribers of the AKMB-news (non-members).

Structure

The Working Group is directed by a board of seven members (president, vice-president, treasurer, secretary, three further members of the board), elected for two years and re-eligible once. Beside the board several special interest groups were founded, in order to work on special subjects. At the moment two groups are active: the “Fachgruppe EDV” (Special Interest Group Data Processing) and the “Fachgruppe Standards” (Special Interest Group Standards). since 1995 furthermore an editorial board publishes in cooperation with the board of the AKMB two issues per year of the journal “AKMB-news”, dedicated to subjects of the day-to-day work – information about the arts, museums and libraries. The AKMB presents her self through a website (<http://www.akmb.de>) and offers a discussion list. The members receive the journal and have special conditions in case of registering for workshops and seminars, organised in cooperation with the AKMB.

Workshops, Seminars and Papers

The AKMB offers at least once a year the internal members meeting, normally in the context of the annual German librarian's conference, together with a public accessible presentation of papers. For example in 2009 the meeting took place at Erfurt with papers about unusual working fields for information specialists in museums, in 2008 the meeting took place at Mannheim with papers about the relationship between museum libraries and collection management in museums in Denmark, in Switzerland and Germany. In 2007 the librarian's congress took place at Leipzig. The results of the work of the Special Interest Group Standards were presented and discussed within the AKMB community. This was the starting point to introduce the certification process within art and museum libraries. The meetings and lectures are archived on the website of the AKMB, papers are published in the AKMB-news.

Besides the annual meeting the AKMB organises workshops and seminars in cooperation with the “Initiative Fortbildung für wissenschaftliche Bibliotheken” (Initiative Education and Training for Scientific Libraries), directed by Evelin Morgenstern (former working within the “Beratungsdienst Spezialbibliotheken am Deutschen Bibliotheksinstitut”, i.e. Consulting Service for Special Libraries at the German Library Institute at Berlin). Normally two or three

seminars or workshops take place per year: the AKMB has established the tradition of a two day lasting "Herbstfortbildung der AKMB" (Autumn Workshop of the AKMB) in October or November. In 2008 for example the workshop took place at the German Historical Museum Berlin and presented papers concerning Web 2.0 – about wikies, podcasts, blogs pp. In 2007 the workshop was held at the University Library at Heidelberg and was dedicated to digitalisation projects and their funding. In 2009 the workshop took place at the "Institut für Moderne Kunst" (Institute of Modern Art) at Nuremberg and discussed new developments – changing structures, offering new services, meeting new requirements of the users pp. Furthermore more general seminars are offered by the Initiative Education and Training, for example library management in special libraries, information retrieval in the field of art history pp. Those workshops built also the basis of the development of the standards, to be used as criteria within the certification process. These activities are documented on the website of the AKMB and published in the journal, too.

The Development of the Procedure "Certification of Art and Museum Libraries"

The Special Interest Group Standards was founded in 2004. The group decided to develop a procedure for the evaluation of the work of librarians in art and museum libraries in German-speaking countries (Zangl, 2007, and Popst, 2008).

Aims

The art and museum libraries have to justify their existence and their services facing the fact to have less financial and human resources at their disposal. Furthermore the internet seems to have an answer to each question, the users of art and museum libraries have directly access - 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The group has developed criteria in order to be able to present the funding body of an art and museum library transparent information concerning the used resources and to be recognized as indispensable for research, education and training.

The Development of the Criteria

21 colleagues, working in different types of art and museum libraries, met in 2006 three times at Berlin. The workshops were organised by the Initiative Education and Training. Supported by Meinhard Motzko, an expert in the field of library management, the participants discussed and worked out the criteria, describing the minimal standard with regard to the scope and aims, working methods and services, structures and skills of the staff. The criteria have to be measurable and valuable in order to be transparent and checkable. The criteria have to be checked and – if needed – adapted to the changing requirements. During a meeting in December 2006 the criteria were edited and published in January 2007. The criteria cover the following subjects: aims and target groups, organisation, funding, collection, use of the collection and services, communication and marketing, cooperation and networking, personal resources, required space, technical equipment.

Examples

Some examples are mentioned to explain the approach:

- Aims and Target Groups: Criteria 3 states, that the library defines in a written statement and in accordance to the funding body measurable aims of its work, for example the development of the collection, the support of exhibitions, the number of data records to be put in the database per year.
- Funding: Criteria 10 states, that the library specifies a budget for each year, containing expenses and receipts, for example for the acquisition of media as journals, monographs, subscription of databases, publication exchange, working material, financial resources for exhibitions and other events.
- Collection: Criteria 12 states, that the library lays down principles for collection development and acquisition, according to the aims of the funding body, for example the collection profile – with regard to the subject, the historical and geographical scope, the type of media pp, The collection profile has to be checked and adapted every three years.
- Use of Collection and Services: Criteria 26 states, that the library is accessible by telephone during the opening hours. During the closing hours an answerphone shall offer a feedback within the next working day.

- **Communication and Marketing:** Criteria 42 states, that the library asks once a year its users concerning the degree of popularity and the users needs. The results have to be documented and are used to adapt the library's services and offers.
- **Cooperation and Networking:** Criteria 51 states, that the library works together with other departments of the funding body, for example the educational service, and other local cultural institutions, for example schools, colleges, universities. The library offers at least once per year such services and documents them in a written statement.
- **Personal Resources:** Criteria 56 states, that for every staff member exists a written job specification, including the requirements. The profile defines also the needed skills – formal qualifications, subject expertise, social and management skills, working methodologies, often only acquirable by experience.
- **Required Space:** Criteria 67 states, that the "DIN-Fachbericht 13" (Special Report concerning the construction and use of scientific libraries of the "DIN", the German Institute for Standardisation) forms the basis of the construction and the use of the building. Differences have to be documented in a written form.
- **Technical Equipment:** Criteria 81 states, that the library has to be integrated in the IT concept of the funding body or the institution itself, for example with regard to the local net, the firewall, data storing, updates. An administrator is responsible for the technical support.

The criteria have been presented the first time at the session of the AKMB, held at the annual congress of librarians at Leipzig in March 2007, and were discussed afterwards within the AKMB community until July 2007. In September the version 1.0 was published officially on the website of the AKMB (<http://www.akmb.de/web/html/fachgruppen/standards.html>). Besides the information around the standard, material about the work of the Special Interest Group and links to comparable activities can be found there.

The Audit

The standards, i.e. a list of 83 criteria, are checked every year in order to secure the suitability and the relevance by a group of auditors, supported by library scholars. Due to international procedures of certification the implementation of the criteria are controlled within the library by two specially instructed auditors. A criterion can be reached, not be reached or exceeded. Criteria, being unfit for the checked institution, have not to be considered. The number of points to be reached changes therefore from case to case in detail. An external, independent institution decides, with regard to the auditors report, about the award of the certification. The certification is valid for three years. The procedure is voluntary and with costs. Already the discussion of standards and their implementation presents the first step within the field of quality management and reflection about the own work. The certified quality of the art or museum library can be mentioned as quality criterion of the funding body.

Findings: First Implementations and Experiences

In October 2007, during a workshop, 9 colleagues were trained to become an auditor and the first procedure was realised successfully at the hosting institution, the Institute of Modern Art at Nuremberg. An agreement between the AKMB and the "Institut für Bibliotheks- und Informationswissenschaft" (Institute of Library and Information Science, Humboldt University Berlin) was signed in order to confirm officially the role of a member of the institute as responsible for awarding the certificates.

The Process

A member of the Special Interest Group is mentioned as contact person for interested libraries. Other members promote the procedure in libraries and museums within seminars, conferences and workshops. All members agreed to advise interested librarians during the preparation of the procedure, to answer all kinds of questions concerning the procedure and to report about their own experiences. A comprehensive description of the development of the standards, the procedure of quality management and practical examples is presented within a diploma thesis. The author has applied the procedure to the library of the "Kunstmuseum" (Museum of Arts) at Wolfsburg as result of her practical training in this library (Appel, 2008).

Further Procedures

The AKMB decided to support financially two further procedures. One procedure was realised at Vienna (Austria) and one at Hannover (Germany). During the librarian's annual conference 2008 at Mannheim the AKMB awarded officially the certificates to those two libraries reaching the criteria of certification. One library did not reach the criteria. In November 2008 the next auditor's meeting took place at the Institute of Library and Information Science at Berlin to discuss the experiences of the auditors and to revise the criteria. The participants changed the criteria in some details and decided to admit the possibility of correction within a defined period when only a certain percentage of the points to be achieved is lacking.

In 2009 the museum library of the "Landesmuseum für Arbeit und Technik" (Regional Museum for Work and Engineering) at Mannheim has implemented the procedure successfully and another museum in Switzerland has expressed its interest, too. The Group of Special Interest met during the annual librarian's conference at Erfurt 2009 in order to exchange information and to listen to talks, given there, about the experiences of other initiatives in this field. In October 2009 the Special Interest Group met once again to discuss the experiences of the last audit and to develop strategies to promote the standard and the certification. During this meeting the members discussed the certification procedure of public libraries in Niedersachsen (State Lower Saxony), where the advisory body for public libraries of the state ("Büchereizentrale") is responsible for the evaluation and certification. The standard there differs with regard to the number of volumes, of staff and tasks of the libraries. Because of the federal structure of Germany and the responsibility of the states and the cities for cultural duties as well as the different organisational forms of the art and museum libraries it is difficult to find the right partner to confirm the certification and explain through this partnership the recognition for the quality of the work.

The internal workflow of an audit was compiled, the reports of all realized audits are collected at one point and can be used for the preparation of further procedures.

Comparable Initiatives and Projects

Because of several inquiries we know quite a lot about activities concerning the procedure. The procedure will be subject of a doctoral thesis. A teacher of the "Fachhochschule Hannover – Medien, Information und Design, Abteilung Information und Kommunikation" (University of Applied Science – Media, Information and Design, Department Information and Communication) is member of the Special Interest Group, has participated in the workshop for auditors and integrates the subject into her teaching activities. Quality management and evaluation are subjects of research and training at other German library schools and university institutes, for example at Stuttgart and at Berlin (s. the collection of literature and material at: <http://www.akmb.de/web/html/fachgruppen/standards.html>).

Members of the "Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Parlaments- und Behördenbibliotheken" (APBB – Working Group of Governmental Libraries) at Hamburg had to react to requirements of the Hamburg Court of Auditors of 2004: to renew the media collection, to enforce disposal, to establish an union catalogue, accessible for all public authorities, and to establish a liaison agency for department comprehensive general tasks. The governmental libraries developed 82 criteria – nearly identical to the standards of the AKMB and supported by the same expert for library management. The implementation has not commenced yet. The discussion about the support by the Working Group is realised through a public accessible wiki (s.a. <http://www.apbb.de/>).

The Department of German Culture of the self-governed province Bozen (South Tyrol) has established a project, called "Qualität in Bibliotheken" (Quality within Libraries) to develop the public libraries. Different quality criteria for different types of libraries (for example: criteria for libraries, directed by volunteers, directed by professional staff, criteria of the Library Association of South Tyrol) were developed and published. The "Amt für Bibliotheken und Lesen" (the Office for Libraries and Reading) advises the interested libraries and supports the preliminaries. In the main public libraries have passed successfully the audit process and received the certificates (s. <http://www.provincia.bz.it/kulturabteilung/bibliotheken/qualitaet-in-bibliotheken.asp>).

Conclusion

The AKMB, specially the Special Interest Group Standards, obtained really great interest concerning the developed procedure of quality management. Several publications and presentations were realised in 2008 in order to promote and discuss the procedure. The procedure seems to be transferable to other types of special libraries (governmental libraries, music libraries pp.) and into the international context. This paper, given at the Florence Conference, will be presented on the website of the AKMB within the information concerning the Special Interest Group Standards.

The discussion about the process is going on – a paper of Austrian master students (library and information studies) discussed the procedure and mentioned – among others - the following problems: possibly no support of the funding body, the complexity and high level of the standards, the costs for the implementation of the procedure, the needed effort of personal, time and financial resources of the preparation. Some points have to be specified: What do we need to reach the criteria? Examples shall be given. What do the criteria mean? Explication is needed in some cases. Should there be a ranking of criteria instead of the equality of the criteria yet? What does mean 'not assessable'? Which role do the auditors play and how do they influence the decision to grant the certificate? (Brumen, 2009)

The Special Interest Group Standards continues the promotion of the procedure – during the meeting in October 2009 further plans were developed: another publication, may be with support of the Institute for Museum Research at Berlin ("Institut für Museumsforschung" Berlin) was suggested, promotion by example of the members of the group and of the board of the AKMB, by statements of successfully certified libraries and their directors, by updating the homepage and the standards through review and recommendation. A closer relationship to the German Library Index BIX (<http://www.bix-bibliotheksindex.de/>) could be useful as well as the attempt to gather information concerning quality management in art and museum libraries on the pages of the Expertise Network of German Libraries ("Bibliotheksportal – Kompetenznetzwerk für Bibliotheken", s. <http://www.bibliotheksportal.de/>).

Beside the discussion in German speaking countries, the AKMB is interested in an exchange of information concerning already existing implementations of evaluation and quality management procedures in art and museum libraries abroad and a cooperative further development of such procedures. The annual conference of ARLIS NA in April 2010 in Boston will be a possibility to find out the state of the art in North America.

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