

The Information Service at Braunschweig University of Technology for the South-East Lower Saxony Region

J. Daum

Braunschweig University of Technology

J. Daum, "The Information Service at Braunschweig University of Technology for the South-East Lower Saxony Region." *Proceedings of the IATUL Conferences*. Paper 3.

<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/iatul/1975/papers/3>

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries. Please contact epubs@purdue.edu for additional information.

THE INFORMATION SERVICE AT BRAUNSCHWEIG UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

FOR THE SOUTH-EAST LOWER SAXONY REGION

by

J. DAUM

At the German Library Congress held in the Summer of 1973, a plan for the development of libraries in the Federal Republic was presented to the Chairman. This plan recommends the provision of literature by means of a network of libraries. The fundamentals of the plan outlined in the paper will probably be realised only gradually and over a long period of time, but some of the guidelines mentioned were, for one small area, the stimulus towards a co-operative system which demonstrates some new possibilities. My description of these possibilities and their realisation should be seen within the framework of the ideas expressed in the Library Plan 73.

It is our duty as librarians not only to preserve, collect and examine the wealth of literature that we have in our institutions, but also to inform the people who wish to know of it, and to put the literature at their disposal. Only libraries are in a position to fulfil the desire for literature and for information, whether it be for a manuscript from the Middle Ages or a novel, a special highly scientific work or an encyclopaedia, vernacular writing or a children's book of fairy tales, a scientific journal or a newspaper.

The primary function of a library, the supply of information, is of course a relatively costly business, and it can only be fulfilled to a limited extent by any individual library. Improved efficiency can only come by close relationships within the region. Difficulties arising out of limited co-operation and the varied holdings of libraries must, as in other spheres such as traffic planning or environmental protection, be overcome. For this reason, and bearing in mind the above-mentioned considerations of preservation, collection and accessibility of information, the libraries of our area set up a co-operative system. This venture marks a new attempt at working together to serve the reader. The libraries lose a certain degree of isolation and regain a definite place in the culture of the country.

In this connection it is also very important to remember that libraries today are in many ways concerned purely with service, and that they will become even more so in the future. A system must therefore be developed which guarantees the fulfilment of their function as lending libraries, centres of information and library co-ordination points, as well as efficiency and good administration. If these demands cannot be met, then libraries will remain hopelessly backward in development. It must also be noted here that all technical possibilities must be considered in order to make use of any new developments in technology, such as EDP etc.

A basis for greater co-operation between libraries in South-East Lower Saxony was established on completion of the Braunschweig Technological University's new library building. During the course of one year, 36 libraries in this part of Lower Saxony have joined the co-operative system and thus greatly improved the service to the public. As can be seen from the libraries involved, this region stretches from Wolfsburg in the north to Salzgitter in the south, from Helmstedt in the east through Grifhorn to Peine in the west, and also includes the South Harz area.

All possible types of libraries are involved, covering the most varied subject areas. The information network draws on large scientific libraries, public libraries, and also specialised research libraries. Within this organisation over 2½ million books and 12,000 current periodicals, German and foreign, are at the reader's disposal. The hub of the information system is Braunschweig University Library, which is supplemented by the larger public and scientific libraries who also lend a considerable part of their stock.

A central catalogue is already available in the University library covering most of these libraries. It lists more than 1½ million books and many periodicals, and will be extended to include the special libraries. If, for example, a particular work on nuclear energy is required in Wolfsburg, the first step is to turn to Braunschweig University Library. If the work is not available there, other libraries are approached by telex or telephone.

In addition the catalogue can be of great help to anyone who wishes to know where to turn, or who can help him most quickly in the circumstances. Thus the reciprocal easy access to information and help outside one's own lending material is of a practical assistance which must not be underestimated.

In the field of technical development (copying facilities, data processing, technical equipment, etc.) additional co-operation has begun which enables the libraries not only to exchange experiences, but also to carry out joint undertakings.

A further service offered by Braunschweig Technological University Library is the arrangement of seminars on subjects such as loans service, information, readers' research and technical development for the librarians of the whole region.

The information service has also been extended to an agreement on acquisitions. This means that the libraries, in accordance with the demands of their particular collections, try to avoid the purchase of duplicates, and in so doing are able to use their funds to provide a wider selection of literature. For the same reason, any duplicates are exchanged, so that both parties save money which is needed for other things. For example, Wolfsburg Public Library has received from us the large "Library of Congress" catalogue, because this had been superseded in our library by the new "National Union Catalogue". Wolfsburg Library was financially in no position to purchase the catalogue, so here the effect of the system has been truly worth while.

Representatives of all the libraries of the region meet every two months in a different library to discuss any interesting problems which may have arisen. It should be noted here that it has been possible to improve general information provision as well as access to literature. Last year a tape-slide machine was installed which gives a twenty-minute introduction to the use of the University Library, and which is, at the moment, unique in Germany. So far, more than 10,000 readers have seen this presentation, and have gained a far better

conception of the possible uses of a library. The library is now working on making the tape-slide presentation, in a simplified and amended form, applicable to the other libraries in the region. Each library will receive a set of about 100 slides, with the aid of which the reader in the smallest library will be made aware of the facilities available there. The presentation is constructed in such a way that those general slides which apply to all libraries serve as a standard version, and those which apply only to particular libraries can be interchanged.

All the libraries belonging to the co-operative system possess a microfiche listing of the periodicals available in the University Library, and can therefore establish which periodicals are available there. This greatly facilitates the ordering procedure in the region. Every month the libraries and all scientific institutions in and around Braunschweig receive a list of the new acquisitions of the University Library, which is a great help to them in deciding what they will themselves purchase.

Another idea which is in the planning stage at the moment is a book transporting service between the libraries, to get literature to the place where it is needed even more quickly. Unfortunately the means are not available to carry out this experiment on a large scale.

As you can see from this summary, there are many ways in which a library information service may be of use to other libraries in the area. The possibilities can only be realised, however, if the librarians will commit themselves wholeheartedly to the scheme, then prepare for it gradually and with due consideration for their financial circumstances.

The example of this region, the experiment which we have christened BISON (Library Information for South-East Lower Saxony) has encouraged many other areas to imitate it. At the moment a similar co-operative system is being developed in the northern part of Lower Saxony, and another in Austria.

I hope that with this paper we have given you also an incentive for future activity.

DISCUSSION

G. A. HAMEL: Professor Daum has given us a good example of co-operation and no doubt there are further stages to come. Can you tell us more about the direction you are taking, and whether you have a programme setting out objectives and time-limits for achieving them? What do you see as the realistic limits for co-operation in your district?

J. DAUM: We are looking next at the policy for acquisitions by the different libraries. We do not see the need for duplicating titles in five or six libraries when they are only likely to be required once a year, or once every two years. We aim to have a combined policy on periodicals and monographs in special fields. We shall then tackle the creation of a union catalogue for the region, copies of which will be available on microfiche in each library. We also hope to institute a speedy loans service between the libraries using private transport.

A. J. EVANS: When a decision is taken to cut down the number of regional copies of a major abstracting journal such as Chemical Abstracts do you measure usage

DISCUSSION (continued)

beforehand or, if not, what judgement is involved?

J. DAUM: It is fairly easy to persuade official Institutes that decisions are based on sound economic grounds.

C. G. WOOD: In respect of the Institute libraries of the University of Braunschweig have all their rich resources been brought into the co-operative scheme? Many Institutes value their independence.

J. DAUM: Yes, all these resources are used.

M. W. HILL: If you have reduced the number of regional copies of Chemical Abstracts from seven to two, have you substituted a central bibliographic information service to the deprived five libraries or do you find that readers are now travelling to make use of the two available copies?

J. DAUM: Previously there were copies in Institutes situated side-by-side and opening hours were short. The University Library is open much longer. Such abundance is uneconomic and means less money for buying other periodicals.

A. C. BUBB: I am interested in how you are using tape-slides. For what audience are they intended and are you using them to explain about shared abstracts and periodical titles?

J. DAUM: The tape-slides are used for groups of new students and describe the organisation of the library and use of elementary tools. Since colleagues also wanted to use this type of material for other groups we have prepared another series which is useful in general terms.

A. C. BUBB: Can individual users view the tape-slides?

J. DAUM: No, they are not available.

S. WESTBERG: Has there been any evaluation of the use and functioning of tape-slides at Braunschweig?

J. DAUM: So far, we have not done this at all.