tered, then had him pose for his photo, all a more
time consuming process than it should have
been. After more than an hour, he got the card,
and began his descent “into the vast underground
caverns” of the reading rooms.

The books are all located up in the towers,
and the reading rooms are located deep into
the earth. There was no signage to assist him. The
floors are described as “spiked metal” and he
went through several turnstiles and several doors
before getting on an escalator for a ten-story
descent into the basement. Two more turnstiles,
two more windowless metal doors. He
requested a seat in the reading room from a com-
puter, inserting the card into a turnstile to
access the room. He described the rooms, built
around a grass court, which opened to the sky,
dizzingly high above. In the glassed-in
library he found a small forest of immense trees, all
chained to the concrete floor. As he progressed
towards the seat he had reserved, he felt “more like
an ant than an archivist.”

His experience using the computer to make
his reading selections was also full of frustra-
tion with non-working equipment, delays in re-
trieval, depression from the feeling of no air
and light, and so on. He noted the lack of a cafe-
eteria, “only an appalling, gloomy little café near
the subterranean entrance, with a view of the
gagged and bound trees straining toward the
invisible sky.”

He described how rich the materials used to
build and furnish the Library are but declares it
“the largest and most depressing of all the mon-
uments of pompous official French culture that
have been produced in France since the war, the
administration’s revenge on the individual. All
that French wit, all that charm, all that gaiety,
all that somber pessimism, even all that intelli-
gent despair sunk deep into the earth like a mis-
sile installation, with bad sandwiches and a
chained and bound garden.”

His use of the word monument in describ-
ing the Library prompted me to search the Web
and sure enough under one locates the
Bibliothèque National under Monuments. In
spite of his descriptions, or maybe because
of them, this is one National Library I’ve added
to my list to visit some day.

As an opposing view, though admittedly
there is no actual description of the Paris library
in this book, author Dan Brown acknowledged
the assistance of the staff of several institutions
in performing research for his best seller, The
Da Vinci Code, A Novel (Doubleday, 2003;
ISBN 0-385-50420-9), including the
Bibliothèque Nationale, (as well as the Gnostic
Society Library).

He also has a librarian character in this novel,
and describes the library and the librarian in
Chapter 92. While this is a work of fiction, much
of what he wrote sounds more factual than fic-
tional. The library is described as one of the
“most complete and electronically advanced
religious research libraries in the world,” located
at King’s College in London. The primary re-
search room of this library is a “dramatic octa-
gonal chamber, dominated by an enormous
round table surrounded by which King Arthur
and his knights might have been comfortable were it
not for the presence of twelve flat-screen com-
puter workstations. On the far side of the room,
there was a reference librarian was just pouring
a pot of tea and settling in for her day of work.”
The librarian is described as having a genial,
erudite face, a pleasingly fluid voice, and thick
horn-rimmed glasses hanging around her neck
(ouch). The description of the reference inter-
view, and the search process, both appear to be
accurate portrayals. The only two items that
seemed off were that the two protagonists were
searching for a book of tea and the linear search
strategy they were seeking (do we normally do that?),
and, while the system was working, offered
them both a cup of tea. A rather civilized
way to conduct our business, don’t you think?
And the round table and reading room sound
much cozier than those of the Bibliothèque Na-
tionale.

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Lost In Austin

by Thomas W. Leonhardt (Director, Scarborough-Phillips Library, St. Edward’s University, 3001 South Congress Avenue, Austin, TX 78704-6289; Phone: 512-448-8470; Fax: 512-448-8377) <leonhard@libr.stedwards.edu>

A

other Midwinter Meeting of the
American Library Association
has been logged, a bit earlier than usual, but
not a bad way to start the new year. We have
been to more than twenty five midwinter meet-
ings but fewer than thirty. In other words, I don’t
remember exactly and am not going to try to
reconstruct my life from that angle.

It is fortunate that the midwinter meeting
has grown so large. Again, I can’t remember exactly
which year it was but it was an inaugu-
ral year and we met in Washington, D.C. For
the first time, the meetings could not all fit
into the Shoreham and the Sheraton and we could
meet everyone we knew either in the exhibits or
crossing B. So I was going from one hotel to the
other. There was a People’s Drug Store right
near the Metro station before the metro existed
where we would go for breakfast, a home cooked
meal with eggs fried just so, over medium with
grits and bacon on the side and crispy toast
that picked up the yolk that the grits didn’t. The
women behind the counter were friendly and
easy going but efficient, too, traits that came
straight from home. All things considered, it is
my favorite breakfast spot of all the places I
have eaten at conferences over the years with second
place going to The Ferris Wheel, that great,
Greek-owned eatery near the Palmer House in
Chicago. Grits were not served but everything
else was good. Both places, too, had regular
clientele who came in for coffee to go and per-
haps breakfast, too.

San Diego is a good place to visit in the
winter but it doesn’t have soul. Give me Chicago in
the winter anytime for a meeting. Or Washington, D.C. with its presence
created by those rock solid govern-
ment buildings. I hate, though, to think what it must be like right
now, more a fortress than a city.
I hope that I am wrong.

“There Ought To Be
A Law Department”

It was my good fortune to at-
tend Department of Defense
high schools in what was then
West Germany. I began as a freshman at
Wuerzburg American High School
in 1958 and graduated from
Karlsruhe American High
School in 1961. The base at Wuerzburg (I ac-
tually lived in Schweinfurt) is still there but the
one in Karlsruhe was closed around 1994. The
post library, instead of being disbanded like the
others that were being closed, was offered to
and accepted by the Karlsruhe Public Library
and opened its doors as a branch in 1996.

Without going into details, I have developed
a correspondence with the president of the Freunde
der amerikanischen Bibliothek
Karlsruhe e.V. (Friends of the American Li-

brary in Karlsruhe, tax exempt) whose name
is Karen Adamic-Rischmam. She has lived in Karlsruhe for twenty five years (she teaches
English there). She worked it out for me to be-
come a friend by letting me buy a book on
Amazon.de and having it shipped di-
rectly to the Library. Otherwise I would
have had to find a way to send 25Eus-
ros and incur currency conversion
charges.

If you would like to join, I am sure that Karen
would be happy to accommodate
you and if you can send her
25 Euros you don’t go to
the trouble of buying an
American book through a
German outlet. But that is not the main intent
here. The main intent is to find an American
publisher for Karen. Here is some background
in her own words.

“I’ve lived in Karlsruhe for twenty five
years, longer than in any other place. This
has not made me feel German, if any-
thing more American, but I do like
Karlsruhe, more in fact than most
Karlucer, who seem to have a complex
about their provincial city. I wonder
if you have seen or read about the recent
film Buffalo Soldiers, which is not about
continued on page 64

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EARLY LIFE: Grew up outside of Philadelphia. Lived in Atlanta for nearly 20 years with a brief stint in Houston.

FAMILY: Immediate family lives in Southwest Florida. One sister who's a family practice physician.

EDUCATION: B.S. Villanova University, M.S. Georgia State University

MOST MEANINGFUL CAREER ACHIEVEMENT: Bringing online searching to physicians. My former employer, BRS Information Technologies, pioneered the development of online research for the medical community. I’ve always been proud of having been part of the start-up group.

WHERE DO I SEE THE INDUSTRY IN FIVE YEARS: I see library patrons being able to link seamlessly among aggregators. The recent collaboration to integrate OpenURL has been a major step in this direction. I anticipate that most of the technical and organizational issues relating to linking will be resolved.

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES: Volunteer at the Atlanta Midtown Assistance Center providing emergency help to people who’ve recently been unemployed. (I've been very busy lately!)

GOAL I HOPE TO ACHIEVE IN THE NEXT FIVE YEARS: Become an advocate for the poor and those with special disabilities.

IN MY SPARE TIME I LIKE TO: Play 40s music on piano and organ, Practice Iyengar yoga several times a week with very stringent female teachers.

PHILOSOPHY: Live in the present moment.

Lost In Austin
from page 63

the Black American regiment but about soldiers stationed in Germany in 1989. It was shot in Karlsruhe at the abandoned Gruzyensky Barracks, at the Tulfa Bad, and many other locations in and around the city. I worked on this film in “Local Crowd Casting”. It was my job to find extras to play American soldiers. My daughter was the set production assistant to the director. That was an exciting few months for us!

I have written a “krimi” (mystery novel, as I’m sure you know) set in Karlsruhe. It was translated directly from the English manuscript into German and will be published in November (Karen Adams, Straßfeneger, Heyne Verlag). It's really just an excuse to portray Karlsruhe from the point of view of an American private eye named McAdam. I’m still looking for an American publisher, but so far no agent has thought an American public could be interested in a tale set in the German provinces.

Well, I have a copy of Straßfeneger and can vouch for its quality. I have read many a mystery with settings in exotic locations not of the author's origin. Many of us like to read about places we have never visited and we also like to read about locations we have some familiarity with. Joe Gores writes about the Bay Area where I went to school and worked for a number of years so he is fun to read at that level but I wouldn’t have read two of his novels if they hadn’t had good characterization, a plot, and a mystery.

On the other hand, I have never been to Paris but Maigret mysteries fascinate me and they were written not by a Parisian, but by a Belgian. Mon dieu! What is wrong with American publishers? What Karen fails to mention but is included in her book is the fact that her book was well on its way to winning a contest with a $20,000 prize and an American publisher but someone, a committee no doubt, decided that it was too provincial for American audiences. Straßfeneger has great characters — McAdam, his wife Uschi, and Connie, the female police officer who leaves the force because, as a woman in a male organization, cannot get a fair shake. There are great descriptions of Karlsruhe and of the street car system. I know people who would read it for the streetcars alone, for goodness' sake. Straßfeneger is a good read and I hope that some publisher reads this and decides to take a look at the manuscript. Karen would be great on a book tour, too. Think of it, an American expatriot of sorts writing mysteries (there will be more McAdam books, I am sure) in German. Let’s strike a blow for internationalism here and move away from the isolationist trend (except when there is oil) that seems to be ailing the United States.

If you want to find out more about this American Library in Karlsruhe, please visit www.american-library.de. Aufwiderschen!