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 turnsstiles 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 computer, inserting the card into a turnstile to access the room. He described the rooms, built around a grass court, which opened to the sky, dizzyingly high above. In the glassed-in area he found a small forest of immense trees, all chained to the concrete floor. As he progressed to 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 frustration with non-working equipment, delays in retrieval, depression from the feeling of no air and light, and so on. He noted the lack of a cafeteria, “only an appalling, gloomy little café near the subterranean entrance, with a view of the gagged and bound trees transtraining 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 monuments 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 intellelctual despair sunk deep into the earth like a missle installation, with bad sandwiches and a chained and bound garden.”

His use of the word monument in describing 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 fictional. 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 research room of the library is a “dramatic octagonal chamber, dominated by an enormous round table around which King Arthur and his knights might have been comfortable were it not for the presence of twelve flat-screen computer workstations. On the far side of the room, a reference librarian was just pouring a pot of tea and sitting 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 interview, and the search process, both appear to be accurate portrayals. The only two items that seemed off were: the fact that the two protagonists were seeking the information 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 Nationale.

Lost In Austin

by Thomas W. Leonhardt (Director, Scarborough-Phillips Library, St. Edward’s University, 3001 South Congress Avenue, Austin, TX 78704-6489; Phone: 512-448-8470; Fax: 512-448-8737) <leonhardt@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 meetings 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 unfortunate that the midwinter meeting has grown so large. Again, I can’t remember exactly which year it was but it was an inaugural year and we met in Washington, D.C. For the first time, the meetings could not all fit into the Shoreham and the Sherraton and we could meet everyone we knew either in the exhibits or crossing La Guardia Avenue 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’s 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 perhaps breakfast, too.

San Diego was 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 government buildings. I hate, though, to think what 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 attend Department of Defense high schools in what was then West Germany. I began as a freshman at Wuerzberg American High School in 1958 and graduated from Karlshruge American High School in 1961. The base at Wuerzberg (I actually lived in Schweinfurt) is still there but the one in Karlshruge 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 Karlshruge 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 Karlshruge e.V. (Friends of the American Library in Karlshruge, tax exempt) whose name is Karen Adam-Adams. She has lived in Karlshruge for twenty five years (she teaches English there). She worked it out for me to become a friend by letting me buy a book on Amazon.de and having it shipped directly to the Library. Otherwise I would have had to find a way to send 25 Euros 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 needn’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 Karlshruge for twenty five years, longer than in any other place. This has not made me feel German, if anything more American, but I do like Karlshruge, more in fact than most Karlsruher, 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
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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 yoga several times a week with very stringent female teachers.

PHILOSOPHY: Live in the present.

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the Black American regiment but about soldiers stationed in Germany in 1989. It was shot in Karlsruhe at the abandoned Gryzynsky 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, Straßengänger, 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 the American public could be interested in a tale set in the German provinces.

Well, I have a copy of Straßengänger 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. Straßengänger 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 streetcar system. I know people who would read it for the streetcars alone, for goodness' sake. Straßengänger 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!!