

From the Dresden Codex to Scanning Robots: The 2007 German Library Study Tour

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The first two weeks of October 2007 were filled with many visits to important libraries in Germany. As a participant of the 10-member tour, it was fascinating to see the many similarities and many differences of government and non-profit/institutional library operations in both the United States and Germany. The study tour was coordinated by the Initiative Fortbildung für wissenschaftliche Spezialbibliotheken und verwandte Einrichtungen e. V. (Initiative for Continuing Education in Academic and Research-Oriented Special Libraries and Related Institutions – www.initiativefortbildung.de) with generous support from the Checkpoint Charlie Foundation (www.cc-stiftung.de) and took place from October 2 – 14, 2007. The program's aim is to acquaint German and American librarians with their counterparts and to open a dialogue of exchange and cooperation.

Notable Highlights

The Stasi Records Office (Archiv der Zentralstelle) office in former East Berlin contains the recovered documents from the legacy of the former intelligence service of the GDR developed in the four decades of existence of the Ministry for State Security. The archives also includes photos, slides, videos, films and recordings. The tour and information session was lead by Günther Bormann and his enthusiasm for the archives office was infectious. He provided tour participants with great detail on how the records are preserved and maintained as well as discussed the process involved in requesting personal records.

Another very fascinating tour and discussion centered on digitization and preservation programs at the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek in Munich. Tour members were provided with an in-depth look at the new scan robot. This was an amazing device (and expensive at approximately €70,000) that scans two pages simultaneously through the use of vacuum suction that pulls two pages upward while

scanning them. The pages then fall to the left and the scanner head moves downward to suction and scan the next two pages while the library technician manages the process.

Tour members also took a detailed look at the preservation unit where delicate manuscripts and monographs are repaired and preserved for displays and future use. Many specialized staff members were mending torn and aged pages and discussed the various processes. One staff member explained how technicians make paper from fibers to fill in gaps of old paper that has been damaged or eaten by insects. It was quite interesting to see these processes



Stasi Records Office



Scan Robot at the Saxon State Library

in action.

Tour members were very privileged to also view rare manuscripts, books, sheet music, and other treasures in the special collections room and were also able to view the pièce de résistance, the Dresden Codex. Tour members carefully examined this version of the Maya Codex (Codex Dresdensis) at the Sächsische Landesbibliothek (SLUB), the state library in Dresden. "It is the most elaborate of the Maya codices, and also a highly important work of art.

Many sections are ritualistic (including so-called

'almanacs'), others are of an astrological nature (eclipses,

the Venus cycles). The codex is written on a long sheet of paper which is 'screen-folded' to make a book of 39 leaves, written on both sides." see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maya_codices for more information.



Dresden Codex



Preservation Unit at the Saxon State Library

Herbert Karbach of the *Archives of the Auswärtigen Amt (Federal Foreign Office in Berlin)* provided the tour members with an in-depth view of many treaties and documents of great importance to Germany. Instruments of Ratification and Foreign and International Treaties were just a few of the documents tour members were able to examine. Mr. Karbach's detailed descriptions of the historical items and documents were fascinating.

While in Berlin, tour members also visited the Bundestag, the Federal Foreign Office, and the German Institute for International and Security Affairs. In Hamburg the group visited the Max Planck Institute and the State Parliament. In Dresden, the Saxon Parliament and the Saxon State Library. In Munich the group visited the Max Planck Institute for Intellectual Property, Competition, and Tax Law. The tour ended with visits to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, France, the Federal Constitutional Court and the Federal Court of Justice in Karlsruhe.

American librarians selected to attend the tour were: Lawrence S. Barish, Wisconsin Legislative Reference Bureau; Susan L. Blixt, Arizona State Library, Archives and Public Records; Frances Perros, U.S. Department of State Library; Eileen G. Deegan, U.S. Department of State; Arthur McEnany, Louisiana Senate Law Library; Jerry W. Mansfield, Congressional Research Service; Cathy L. Martin, North Carolina General Assembly Legislative Library; Dr. Curtis R. Rogers, South Carolina State Library; Donna Scheeder, Library of Congress Law Library; and Christopher Zammarelli, The Brookings Institution. For more information including the tour itinerary, photos, and videos, please visit <http://germanylibtour.wordpress.com/>.