

Multicultural Library services in Hamm

The city of Hamm and its population.

My city -Hamm-, situated in the German Federal State of North Rhine-Westphalia, is ranking no. 40 concerning population figure which was a little less than 180.000 at the end of 2008, slightly decreasing now for a few years. This means: The birth rate is by far lower than the mortality rate; and there is not enough migration to balance the difference. Migration takes place within Germany, but -of course and important with regard to our topic- from anyplace in the world to Germany and furthermore to Hamm.

The city of Hamm hosts at the moment people from round about 120 countries as is indicated by their passports. The total amount of foreign passport holders in Hamm is little less than 20.000 which means a percentage of 10.7%. The number of foreign passport holders in our city is slightly increasing compared to the total population. Actually, the status of passport holders is no longer that relevant to figure out how relevant migrants are for the development of a community:

By far more important is it to focus on microcensus research. With regard to migration we have a common agreement that either the person in question or one of his parents must have been born in another country to call him a migrant. If we count it that way (by census) we know that the percentage of migrants in our city adds up to 26,4% - which is a total of round about 47.000 persons.

In percentage of the migrant population we host the biggest communities of migrants from the following countries respectively with the following mother tongues (which seems to be more appropriate with regard to the changing borders in the 1990's Europe):

- mother tongue Turkish (ca 35,1%)
- mother tongue Russian (ca 20,1%)
- mother tongue Polish (ca 18,2 %)
- mother tongue Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian (ca 7,5 %)
- mother tongue Arabic (ca 3,4 %)
- mother tongue Tamil (ca. 1,2 %).

These are the languages the town administration has to focus on – plus some higher-ranking languages as the universal languages English, French, and Spanish.

Hamm City libraries.

Hamm City Libraries consist of one Central Library, four branches and one mobile library. The central library is situated in old building from the mid 60's; but we are waiting for the opening of a new central library at the turn of the years 2009 to 2010.

The statistical key figures for 2008 are as followed:

Stocks:	240.000 media items
Acquisitions:	30.000 media items (which means a renewal rate of 12%)
Removals:	38.000 media items (which means a removal rate of 16%)
Onloans:	1.055.000
Visitors:	400.000
Webvisits:	200.000
Staff:	37 FTE

Hamm City Libraries received the “Library of the year award” in 2005 because of their efforts concerning the advancement of reading and writing and the promotion of literature.

This award is bestowed by an independent jury and is by far the best approved award in German librarianship.

The current activities of the library focus to a great extent on multicultural issues. One of them is a form of indispensable basics:

We want to find out in what kind of library services customers with migrant background are especially interested. The central library and the most frequented branch will be in the focus of this survey.

Hamm City Libraries will be partner of the Cologne library school whose students will carry out a representative investigation. A similar investigation had already been carried out in one of the neighbouring cities comparable to Hamm; and we do expect to get profound knowledge about the way we can serve the migrant population in the near future in a better way.

On the national level your speaker is at present chair of the German group of experts “Intercultural Library Services”. Through this group of experts and the guests from Austria and Switzerland lots of knowledge and expertise have either come to Hamm City Libraries or are spread nationwide from Hamm City Libraries. This was the main topic of another lecture I gave today – as well as the international impact of the worldwide expertise by the IFLA “Library Services to Multicultural Populations” and -at least to some extent- vice versa.

But there is another international level just about to get importance on how to deal with library customers with migrant background. Emerging from a library in southern Spain emerges the attempt to build up a network of European multicultural libraries. Of course, Hamm City Libraries are invited to join this network – and, of course, they will. But self-understanding, as well, is the fact that real work for the network will be affordable after the opening of the new central library in Hamm. Anyhow, we are just going to be part of a first European conference of multicultural libraries which will be held in late 2009 most probably in Rotterdam, the Netherlands.

The following report on multicultural library services in Hamm refers to the “Five aspects of intercultural library management” which formed the main part of the lecture “Multicultural Services in German Public Libraries” referring itself to the IFLA considerations towards multicultural libraries.

Five aspects of intercultural library management in Hamm

1. Stock management

One of the central parts of intercultural library management as for library management in general is stock management:

Hamm City Libraries have just defined the languages that will be developed most intensely in the near future; and, of course, this is dependent either on the number of speakers in Hamm or on the international importance of the languages (universal languages vs. [only] nationwide languages). As a second aspect we will distinguish between stocks for adult customers and for children.

As for adults the first group of languages (→ bigger stocks) consists of

English,
French,
Polish,
Russian,
Spanish,
Turkish

In this first group of -in the future- well developed languages we find the mother tongues of the three biggest communities of migrants in Hamm (Turkish, Russian, Polish) plus the three universal languages English, French, and Spanish.

The second group (→ medium-sized stocks) includes

Arabic,
Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian, the closely related languages of former
Yugoslavia,
Dutch,
Italian, and
Tamil,

thus the mother tongues of the Hamm communities next in size to the above mentioned, plus Dutch, the official language of the neighbouring countries Belgium and the Netherlands.

As for children we have just one language with fully developed stocks: This is English which has become the official first foreign language even in primary school.

Bigger stocks will be held French (the second foreign language taught at school), and Turkish for the biggest migrant community in Hamm. Medium-sized stocks will be provided in Italian, Russian, and Spanish.

In the children's department we provide not only the foreign language materials but, in addition, bilingual books which are available in German plus ten other languages multilingual books included.

Bilingual and multilingual books are of special value for families who want to retain their mother tongues and let their children get acquainted to them and who, as well, want to enhance their children's knowledge of German. Bi- and multilingual books for children have recently become an integral part of several publishers' efforts in the German speaking world, and they will still enlarge their importance.

Concerning the media presentation I will focus on the stocks for adult readers; concerning the stocks for children we are still in the process of decision-making.

When I speak about the language department I speak about several subcategories which can be named as:

Linguistics (in general)
German (for Germans)
Acquisition of foreign languages
Use of foreign languages
Acquisition of German as a second language
Information about Germany and the Germans in foreign languages

The first two mentioned subcategories are presented according to the classification which is used in Hamm City Libraries in general; for the last-mentioned four the librarian in charge developed a very simple and self-explanatory way of media presentation outside the classification of Hamm City Libraries. This form of media presentation can be described as follows:

60 Languages are presented in one alphabet from A (Afrikaans) to Z.
The structure within each language is very simple and contains in general four main topics, named as:

learning, living, reading, listening.

Each of the four main categories may contain up to ten subcategories

German as a second language forms a main group of its own and contains as a sub-subcategory information on Germany in at least the universal languages and the main migrant languages spoken in Hamm.

It is for sure that this “classification system” is easily adaptable to new developments and needs.

What concerns the purchase of foreign language materials:

We rely on bookstores (mainly internet bookstores and the biggest German library supplier, the ekz) who offer media packages in nearly all languages required in Hamm.

What concerns indexing and cataloguing of foreign language materials:

Indexing in several languages is accomplished with the aid of native speaker volunteers which the library is recruiting step by step. This is intended for at least those languages where there is no knowledge among the staff – and this is currently true for example for Arabic and Tamil.

What concerns cataloguing: We have to transliterate non-Latin characters into Latin characters. At the moment this is inevitable and has in Germany been the usual way of cataloguing media for the last -at least- one hundred years. Actually, we have to admit that the system of transliteration was invented when the target group for media in non-Latin characters consisted merely of scientists – and, of course, they eventually got used to a library-oriented system of rules. Nowadays the target group for foreign language materials has changed to a very great extent: The present-day target group is the ordinary customer – either a person who speaks a foreign language as his mother tongue or a person who is learning to speak a foreign language for any reason.

This means that cataloguing non-Latin characters by means of Latin characters has become obsolete.

But: Although a change is overdue, this change depends on the ability of library-oriented ICT systems which must be able to represent non-Latin characters – and this on the other hand requires the ability of representing unicode characters.

Actually, none of the current library-oriented ICT systems on the German market has dealt with this topic and so this will be the task of ICT solutions on the Web 2.0 basis. All over Europe there are only very few libraries representing at least some languages basing upon non-Latin characters in their catalogues. One of the most prominent examples is “Internationella biblioteket” in Stockholm, Sweden. In the Interbib catalogue you can retrieve materials among others in Arabic, Chinese, Farsi and Cyrillic characters.

2. Multilingual offerings

Multilingual offerings will become one of the crucial success factors for intercultural library services – but, of course, this is a challenging task: We always have to bear in mind that we do not talk about everlasting services in library management, but of a dynamic process. This means that in case of changing, enhancing, or reducing services we always have to trace these changes in all languages required.

Hamm Libraries have decided for the time being to focus on basic information on their library services which are presented under the URL <http://www.hamm.de/stadtbuecherei>.

In 2009 the languages provided are

German
Arabic
Croatian
Dutch
English
French
Polish
Russian
Serbian
Spanish
Tamil
Turkish.

These are the same languages as the ones provided in stock management: the languages of the biggest migrant communities in Hamm plus the three major universal languages.

Hamm City Libraries provide information on a basic level – and there is need for adjustment approximately once a year. Of course, this adjustment has to be done for all eleven languages which is a relevant factor if we consider time and money.

The forthcoming central library will in addition provide self-service machines for lending and return of media and for self-paying. Although these machines are said to be self-explanatory, Hamm City Libraries decided to offer operating instructions in at least the major foreign languages. The multilingual self-service machines will provide instructions in

German
English
French
Polish
Russian and
Turkish.

Another aspect might be a multilingual guidance system – but most probably this will not become reality, for we are afraid of a too much of information. An alternative might be a non-verbal guidance system in addition to the written information in German.

An important part of multicultural offerings are intercultural competencies within the staff. These competencies can be comparatively easily achieved if there are multicultural and multilingual staff members in the library – otherwise these competencies have to be moderated to the staff by means of awareness raising and further education. Hamm City Libraries have set forth into this direction since 2008 with the first of a series of seminars.

Unfortunately the library cannot boast of bilingual library staff in all relevant languages of migrant communities in Hamm: Actually, the most important language -

Turkish- is still missing. We have to admit that we have not paid too much attention to this fact, but in the short run a staff member or a library trainee with knowledge of Turkish or of Turkish origin will be employed.

Anyway, today the library provides knowledge of English, French, Polish, and Russian by means of the staff members.

Additional expertise is brought to the library by bilingual volunteers. We talked about that when describing the purchase of library materials. Bilingual volunteers will in the future play an important role in guided tours through the library especially designed for groups of migrants – but this is still under way and will not be realised until the opening of the new central library.

3. Intercultural offerings

Intercultural offerings means the encounter between different cultures, at least the option that members of the German majority culture get in touch with cultural achievements of the migrant communities and vice versa. The dialogue between cultures is the focus of all components of intercultural offerings – as well in Hamm as elsewhere.

For Hamm City Libraries I have to admit that certain components have not been fully developed yet; this is true for example for bilingual guided tours through the library for groups of migrants; of course, these guided tours conjointly performed by a librarian (mostly German) and a native speaker of one of the migrant languages will be part of the offerings in the very near future.

First experiences have already been made with bilingual story telling in one of the branches of Hamm City Libraries, but these story telling afternoons were not too successful; and so they have been skipped until they will soon be embedded into a coherent concept for bilingual story telling in all parts of Hamm City Libraries.

Encouraging experiences, however, were made with bi- and multilingual reading competitions with pupils of different grades which turned out even interesting for the Turkish community which in general can hardly be inspired.

Author readings in foreign languages play an important role in the promotion of literature as part of the cultural activities of Hamm City Libraries. Every autumn since 1997 the library has organized a literature festival with more than 30 literary events each.

The library has invited authors being native speakers of 20 languages to read out of their books, in total more than 40 readings within 10 years. Languages presented were Arabic, Bosnian, Chukchi, Dutch, Farsi, Finnish, French, Greek, Hebrew, Hindi, Katalan, Kurdish, Mongolian, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Swedish, Spanish, and Turkish. In addition, in 2008, the library organized a first complete week for the encounter of German and Turkish authors and, of course, an audience consisting of native Germans and German speaking Turks.

The next step will be reached when in September 2009 Hamm City Libraries will be responsible for the organization and implementation of the first “intercultural week” in Hamm. The “intercultural week” is organized nationwide aiming at bringing as many ethnic communities as possible within one city together. This is achieved by different kinds of cultural activities such as concerts, lectures, readings and many more, folkloristic performances included.

4. Cross-linking agent in terms of intercultural management within the city

The library has to develop itself to a main cross-linking agent in terms of intercultural management within the city. To achieve this it is indispensable to work in close contact with the local migrant institutions, organisations and groups and to go beyond the doorsteps of the library.

In all bigger cities we have local committees for the integration of migrants – this is true for Hamm with its integration board (in other cities: migrant advisory board) who can deal with all topics relevant to migrants. The city council and its committees are asked to take the proposals of the integration board into consideration, but they do not have to decide according to the proposals: The board does not have the right to come to a decision by itself. At the moment it is impossible to decide how relevant this board will be concerning multicultural library services: In the past library services have only seldom been on their agenda.

In all bigger cities of the Federal State of North Rhine-Westphalia we have Centres for Intercultural Education and Encouragement of Migrant Children [in German: Regionale Arbeitsstelle zur Förderung von Kindern und Jugendlichen aus Zuwandererfamilien, RAA]. In Hamm we have been having such a center now for more than 25 years dealing intensively with the intercultural relationship between the German and the migrant youth. The connections between Hamm City Libraries and the RAA are tight – and many of the programs just described have been carried out in cooperation.

In all cities we have more or less well organised groups of ethnic, cultural, and linguistic minorities that are in most cases interested in being involved. Hamm City Libraries have just started to get in touch with these groups and have not yet come far. But, of course, we do know that these contacts are of great value for the success of the multicultural services. We are aware of the fact that as a first step the multicultural services have to be taken to where the customers are – several of the migrant groups are not used to public libraries in their home countries and so they have to be taught what libraries are able to provide.

Besides the local migrant institutions, organisations and groups we have to consider that the intercultural library is a service partner for day-care centres and schools in terms of stock exchange.

According to the good example of the DaZ-Containers [DaZ = German as a second language] invented by the City Library of Frankfurt on the Main Hamm City Libraries have developed comparable offerings: In different compilations for school grades 1 and 2 respectively 3 and 4 the containers include each ca 30 different items (books and board-games) meant for the playful work with language: plays on words, active games, songs, rhymes, riddles, pictorial dictionaries will all be included. The start of this program in Hamm will correspond with the start of the school year 2009/2010.

5. Catalyser or promoter of “social inclusion” programs

The library has to think beyond its borders and start to become a catalyser or promoter of so-called “social inclusion” programs in terms of reading and reading aloud in its city. These programs do not explicitly encourage groups of migrants, but, of course, they do reach them by not making a distinction between the majority of the population and the migrant population.

For example, Hamm City Libraries give a bookstart package to all parents of new born babies when the children get registered at the registration office. The package

includes a booklet for first reading aloud and a letter to the parents which indicates the importance of reading and story telling in the nine most frequented languages of the city. This initiative came over from the United Kingdom and was first established in Germany in 2006; Hamm City Libraries started their bookstart program in 2007.

Already some years earlier, in 2004, the campaign “Reading bags for first graders” was started by Hamm City Libraries handing over a package with a book for first readers plus lots of information concerning reading and the library, a letter to the parents in German and Turkish included. In Germany this program was first carried out by Hamm City Libraries.

These two programs are addressed to round about 2.000 children each year – this means a lot of extra budget which cannot be taken from the library’s budget but has to be acquired by fund raising from sponsors.

Summary

Hamm City Libraries are on their way to expanded services towards a developing multicultural society – some first steps have been undertaken; but still there is a long way to go; and for sure there will be missteps and misunderstandings. Hopefully these will not prevail, and in the near future Hamm City Libraries will be well recognized for their multicultural services as an integral part of the library services in general: Multicultural services are not anything peculiar ... they are just library services.

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