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**“With a Little Help From My Friends”**  
*Friends of Libraries Groups as Effective Supporters –  
 A Fruitful Joint Venture Between the German Library  
 Association and the Institute of Library and Information  
 Science, Berlin, Germany*

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**Abstract**

*We are delighted to be here today and would like to thank IFLA for giving us this opportunity to speak to you.*

*The overall theme of this conference is the collaboration between library scholars and professionals in order to fulfill the role and functions of 21<sup>st</sup> century information centres to meet the challenges of this fast moving world. So we are going to focus on the model used in a fruitful joint venture between the German Library Association and the Department of Library and Information Science in Berlin, Germany.*

**Libraries Need Friends**

Library associations are becoming increasingly active in advocating for libraries, and for the establishment of libraries where none exist. They also act as agencies in helping libraries to survive where they are experiencing financial difficulties, and when they work to counteract negative public opinion about the value of libraries. Libraries need public advocacy, need ambassadors, need – perhaps more than ever – public recognition of the role that libraries play in literacy and the information society. To put it in one sentence: Libraries need friends and need, in particular, the support of Friends of Libraries Groups!

Friends of Libraries Groups are extremely valuable in promoting, not only public libraries, but also in the way they promote special libraries and large scientific libraries. Friends of Libraries Groups are effective supporters in helping to influence decision makers. Fostering these groups is an important and effective assignment for Library Associations.

Arising from the changed economic and political circumstances of Public Libraries, as well as Special Libraries, University Libraries and States Libraries, the German Library Association had decided to promote the establishment, as well as the activities, of Friends of Libraries Groups.

### **Supporting Friends**

Voluntary work has become an essential factor in maintaining the existence and quality of public libraries, as well as research libraries in recent years. This can be seen in the growing number of Friends of Libraries Groups. In 1975 there were 45 active Friends of Libraries Groups and in 2005 the number had grown to more than 300.

The German Library Association started its activities in October 2000, based on the ideas of FOLUSA (Friends of Libraries, USA). It was not easy to fully implement the American formula for the development of Friends of Libraries Groups in Germany. This was due to the different circumstances which existed within our country.

In 2001 the German Library Association started a survey, in Germany, to quantify the number of active groups in existence, where they were located, what they were doing and what kind of help they needed to develop their groups.

The survey found the following:

- 132 groups responded to the survey.
- Most of these groups were established after 1989.
- The greatest increase in new groups occurred in the 1990's.
- Larger libraries were more likely to have Friends of Libraries Groups attached.

There were, also, an increasing number of published articles about this subject from that time. This issue became more and more relevant after the German unification and the subsequent decrease in many public budgets, when libraries were forced to look for new sources of funds and for a lobby to actively promote their needs and interests.

Furthermore the survey pointed out the main issues of concern to Friends of Libraries Groups:

- organizing and assistance with public events,
- fundraising,
- promotion and advancement of the libraries' image.

The survey also made clear that Friends of Libraries Groups needed a forum for the exchange of ideas and many of them asked for the provision of an umbrella organization to promote their ideals.

### **A Road Map for Friends of Libraries Groups**

So what could the German Library Association do?

They aimed to offer:

- informative literature for the formation of Friends of Libraries groups,
- collaboration with the German Library Association's Law Commission,
- further education on important legal as well as tax issues,
- a platform for information and communication between senior experts.

The German Library Association's officers do this job as volunteers. It was not possible, due to the voluntary nature of the work and a shortage of manpower, to achieve all the association's aims.

Nevertheless they offered:

- a database of Friends of Libraries Groups, accessible on the association's homepage,
- an umbrella organization, called "Standing Conference of Friends of Libraries Groups", with
  - nationwide networking and exchange of experiences,
  - their own website,
  - access to the association's information system,
  - payment of the costs of conference journeys for Standing Conference officers,
  - participation in the work of regional German Library Associations.

### A Wonderful Coincidence

It was a wonderful coincidence, when in March 2005, at the same time as the German Library Association's decision to promote Friends of Libraries Groups, that a class in the Department of Library and Information Science at Humboldt University Berlin, without being informed about the Library Association's decision, decided to publish a handbook on the topic, Friends of Libraries Groups, and to organize a national conference on this subject, to be held in Berlin!

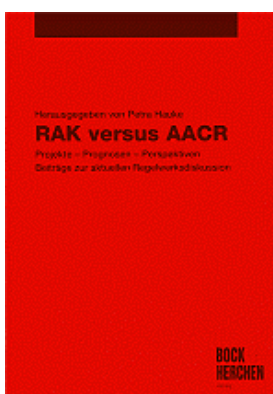
### Looking Back: "Turning an Idea into a Book"

Since the summer term 2002 the Department of Library Science has offered students a course titled "Turning an Idea into a Book". The purpose is to produce a comprehensive volume on a topic related to library science. The articles of the volumes are written by authors in their area of expertise in library science and related fields.

This hands-on seminar has two special dimensions: On one hand, it is an introduction to real-life publishing by producing a book from the first idea to the bound volume. The schedule contains every step from finding the right topic, acquisition of articles, contacting the authors and keeping in touch with them, through being involved in doing the layout, finding ways of financing the publication, editing the articles, to finally getting involved in the advertising and public relation strategies.

On the other hand it deepens the insight of the students in the chosen topic in a rather intensive way: As they edit an up-to-date volume, they get in contact with experts, in the special field that is being dealt with. They also get a current view of developments in this specific area and they experience how scientific writing and discourse function in praxis. The aim of all publications is (1) to make clear the motivation and development of diverse discussions and (2) to help the profession to find solutions for problems in library science, librarianship and library services.

These were the issues of the first books projects from 2002 to 2004:



- RAK versus AACR : Projekte – Prognosen – Perspektiven ; Beiträge zur aktuellen Regelwerksdiskussion / hrsg. von Petra Hauke. Bad Honnef : Bock + Herchen, 2002. 208 S. 3-88347-225-6
- Ehrensache?! : Zivilgesellschaftliches Engagement in öffentlichen Bibliotheken : Positionen – Modelle – Grundlagen / hrsg. von Petra Hauke und Rolf Busch. Mit einem Geleitw. von Georg Ruppelt. - Bad Honnef : Bock + Herchen, 2003. - 280 S. : Ill. - (Bibliothek und Gesellschaft) - (Beiträge zur bibliothekarischen Weiterbildung ; 16) ISBN 3-88347-233-6
- Bibliothekswissenschaft – quo vadis? = Library Science – quo vadis? : Eine Disziplin zwischen Traditionen und Visionen ; Programme – Modelle – Forschungsaufgaben / hrsg. von Petra Hauke. Mit einem Geleitw. von Guy St. Clair und einem Vorw. von Georg Ruppelt. - München : Saur, 2005. - 480S. : Ill., graph. Darst. - ISBN 3-598-11734-5

### **Friends of Libraries – “Only” “Clubs of Notabilities?”**

When, for the summer term 2005, this course was offered for the fourth time, the students found that issues concerning Friends of Libraries Groups might become an interesting subject for a book project. Why did they decide to do this?

In the very large mailing list, INETBIB with more than 4,000 subscribers, not only from Germany, they found an email where Friends of Libraries groups were called “geriatric institutions” – with no qualification/explanation attached at all! And there was no contradiction from any other participant of this mailing list at all! Others called them something like “clubs of notabilities” which meant nearly the same thing, i.e. groups of elderly people, who might have some financial resources and who might be generous towards libraries but who are in fact very similar to that image of a dusty, antiquated and not very attractive library.

So the class asked:

- What do Friends of Libraries really do? What goals do they set themselves?
- What can they really do? What have they already done?
- Are there examples of “Best Practice” which should be published?
- What do they achieve?
- What legal problems can arise when supporting an organisation?
- What strategies, possibilities and platforms are required in order to guarantee an effective exchange of information?
- How do they support library’s marketing strategies?
- Should or could we promote the idea of “Friends of Libraries” by following examples from USA and Great Britain?
- What about a conference and a publication about the activities and possibilities of Friends of Libraries Groups?

### **A Conference on “Friends of Libraries”**

The book project for the summer term 2005 started with the idea for a German-wide conference, with speakers not only from all over Germany but also from England and from USA. The topic was “Friends of Libraries”.

The Berlin conference which took place in May 2005, and organized by the Department of Further Education at Free University Berlin, drew nearly 100 participants, not only from Berlin, but from all over Germany, representing Public Libraries as well as Special and State Libraries. Speakers were invited from research libraries (Berlin, Munich, Wolfenbüttel) as well as from Public Libraries (e. g. Bremen, Halle, Solingen) and from foreign countries (Austrian National Library Vienna, FOLUSA – Friends of Libraries USA,

The Library Campaign, UK). The goal was to publish the papers of the conference in a comprehensive volume, supplemented with examples of inspiring websites, flyers etc.

In the meantime the students became aware of the decision of the German Library Association to promote Friends of Libraries groups. It was at the annual German Library Congress where this decision was made. At this conference a student group from Humboldt University was invited to present a paper about the former book project they had completed.

To cut a long story short, The Executive Secretary of the German Library Association was invited to speak at the scheduled conference – he was very impressed with the students’ project. He pledged to give his support to help this project. He understood the opportunity this gave to enhance the association’s public relations campaign, to increase public awareness of the value of Friends of Libraries Groups.

At the conference a lot of very interesting papers were given, e.g.:

- Friends of Libraries at Bremen – promoting the “culture of reading”.
- Any used books left over? Let’s sell them and give the money to the Solingen Public Library!
- The citizens of Mannheim are very proud of their 100 year history as Patrons of their library.
- The Herzog August Library at Wolfenbüttel as an international centre of intellectual exchange – sponsored by charitable trusts and Friends of Libraries groups.
- Offering wisdom – searching friends! The restoration of Bach manuscripts sponsored by the Friends of the Library.
- Opening hours on Sunday for The University Library Dresden – organized and sponsored by students as Friends of the Library!
- Adopt a book! – The restoration of rare books sponsored by the Friends of the Library at the Archbishop Academic Library Paderborn.
- FOLUSA – Friends of Libraries USA.
- “Cut libraries – see wot hapens”. The Library Campaign, UK.
- Modern fundraising strategies at the Austrian National Library, Vienna.
- Legal and tax matters of Friends of Libraries groups.

### **“With a Little Help From My Friends” – A Handbook**

On the basis of the papers and further texts by well-known experts, the course produced an anthology on the topic, which provides new insights into the work of voluntary organisations, which devote their time to supporting libraries, as well as the political and legal aspects involved in the establishment of Friends of Libraries Groups. The book also includes “Best Practice Examples” from all kinds of libraries. In addition to the conference papers, there are more general reports on voluntary library work in society.

In addition the book also contains:

- an appendix which includes an extract from the German statute book with all statutes important for Friends of Libraries Groups
- examples of information flyers
- examples of well-designed websites
- a list of addresses of all German Friends of Libraries Groups
- a comprehensive bibliography which charts the development of the concept over the last 80 years.

Even though all the articles, except one, “The Library Campaign. U.K.,” are written in German, we used a line from the Beatles Song - “With A Little Help From My Friends” - to express both our intention, as well as the idea of Friends of Libraries Groups.

The book title is:

**“With a Little Help From My Friends – Freundeskreise und Fördervereine für Bibliotheken. Ein Handbuch.”**



With a Little Help From My Friends : Freundeskreise und Fördervereine für Bibliotheken / hrsg. von Petra Hauke und Rolf Busch. Mit Unterstützung des Deutschen Bibliotheksverbandes e. V. – Bad Honnef : Bock + Herchen, 2005. - 336 S. : Ill. – (Bibliothek und Gesellschaft) – (Beiträge zur bibliothekarischen Weiterbildung ; 19) - ISBN 3-88347-244-1 – 38.50 €

The book was published by Bock + Herchen, a well known German publisher who specialises in library science and library practice, in their “Library and Society” series of books.

### **A Fruitful Joint Venture**

But what about the support of the German Library Association, which was promised by the Executive Secretary during the conference?

The German Library Association supported the project by ordering 2,500 copies of the book and giving them free of charge to all its members, to libraries, as well as to Friends of Libraries Groups. With this large number of copies it seems that the students from Humboldt University had produced their first bestseller!

Furthermore, the collaboration between the German Library Association and the student’s group from Humboldt University was a very good experience for both groups. The students in their role as future librarians or as future library scholars learned a lot about the different aspects of library practice and the German Library Association appreciated this wonderful and fruitful collaboration. This was acknowledged by IFLA on the Seoul Conference Homepage:

**“It is time for libraries to work together with library scholars and professionals in order to fulfill the role and functions of 21st century information centres to meet the challenges of this fast moving world.”**

All articles in this book are freely available in PDF format on the institute’s as well as on German Library Association’s homepage:

- <http://www.ib.hu-berlin.de/buchidee/buch4/index.html>
- <http://www.bibliotheksverband.de/konferenz/handbuch.html>

For further information please visit the book project’s website: <http://www.ib.hu-berlin.de/buchidee>.