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International Newspaper Work

Dr. Hartmut Walravens

Director of the Department of Bibliographic Services State Bibliographic Berlin

The IFLA Section on Newspapers consists of a small but dedicated group of experts that deal with aspects of newspaper work in libraries and archives and seek the cooperation of publishers and distributors. The major recent event was the

IFLA Conference «Newspapers in Central and Eastern Europe»

The IFLA Section on Newspapers has an unwritten tradition to focus its annual programme on the host country of the IFLA General Conferences and reach out to colleagues to foster cooperation and spread information on newspaper work in that area. Berlin seemed particularly attractive for this purpose as after the fall of the Berlin Wall the press not only in East Germany, the German Democratic Republic, but also in all of the former Socialist countries underwent radical changes. The previous government directed, strictly censured newspapers were largely privatised, marketing was needed, competition arose, and freedom of speech and reporting were introduced. The names of some newspapers remained, but in many instances the appearance, the contents, and the management changed, not always immediately but gradually. Many new papers were established and tried to find their share of the market.

The business side found repercussions on the side of the libraries and archives. Legal deposit copies did not come in as regularly as before, sometimes not at all. Readers made bold of asking for formerly stowed away or classified material. Frequent use tended to damage originals, especially newspapers, and new preservation programmes had to be considered.

The internet showed up and became popular immediately; newspapers were published on the net and one had to think about proper archiving.

The open borders made it possible for foreign students to use libraries and archives in a never anticipated degree. Historical newspapers that few people had
cared for, like German language newspapers in the Baltic collections, were falling apart owing to heavy use. Immediate microfilming or digitising was necessary but often unrealistic for lack of resources.

In some cases cooperation programmes were started. The German Bosch Foundation saw to the microfilming of a large number of serials in Polish collections. Helsinki University Library joined forces with their Estonian colleagues to digitise Estonian newspapers.

All this led to the proposal of holding an IFLA-sponsored conference on the Newspapers of Central and Eastern Europe in conjunction with the General Conference in Berlin.

But there was also another reason, namely the situation of the newspapers in Central Europe proper, especially in Germany.

Newspapers in Germany

Germany is a traditional newspaper country, and in a few years people will celebrate the 400th anniversary of the publication of the first newspaper in the country. German history was, however, not favourable to newspaper collecting – the country, the Holy Roman Empire, consisted of many kingdoms, dukedoms, principalities, cities, and counties with different press regulations. It took till 1871 that legislation was harmonised in a unified country. Attempts at investigating and recording what newspapers were extant were already made by Martin Spahn before WWI but he did not receive enough support. Hans Traub prepared a catalogue finally in 1933 but WWII with the destruction of German cities and the subsequent division of the country turned previous newspaper collections into a patchwork of scatters. Many holdings perished or were moved to other places, and Traub’s pioneering effort has only historical value today. The urgent need of taking stock of existing serials after WWII - in the interest of research and scholarship – led to a Union Catalogue of Foreign Serials (Gesamtverzeichnis ausländischer Zeitschriften und Serien, GAZS) which was combined with a later Union Catalogue of German Serials (Gesamtverzeichnis Deutscher Zeitschriften

und Serien, GDZS) and grew into an online database on a cooperative basis – the German Union Catalogue of Serials (Zeitschriftendatenbank, ZDB, briefly described in this volume by Bernd Augustin). Newspapers were of the lowest priority to many libraries as their users were interested mainly in scholarly and scientific journals. Nevertheless, a few libraries included their newspapers in ZDB, and then thanks to the generous support of the German Research Association (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, DFG) several important collections were integrated in it: A small Union File of Foreign Newspapers (Standortverzeichnis ausländischer Zeitungen und Illustrierten, SAZI), the holdings of the former Deutsche Staatsbibliothek (the part of the Preußische Staatsbibliothek that remained in East Berlin) and those of the former Institute of Marxism-Leninism (now part of the Federal Archives, Berlin branch). Thus the number of newspapers in ZDB grew to currently 67,000, a number which includes, however, magazines, illustrated papers etc. Nevertheless, this figure is estimated to represent only one third of the papers published in Germany. So what Germany urgently needs is a national programme for the systematic investigation and cataloguing of existing newspapers, their preservation microfilming and subsequent digitisation for the sake of scholars and students who so far are frustrated by the situation and more often than not dispense with using newspapers as source material.

http://zdb-opac.de

The example of other countries might serve as a model for Germany:

– The Scandinavian countries have practically all their newspapers catalogued and most of them filmed.

– In the UK the Newsplan⁴ project provides a nationwide survey of newspaper holdings and see to preservation microfilming. Currently £ 5 mill. from the Heritage Lottery Fund have been devoted to the support of newspaper work.

– In France the Bibliographie de la presse française⁵ is an impressive descriptive catalogue of the newspaper holdings in each département.

– In the United States so far about $ 60 mill. have been spent, largely by the National Endowment for the Humanities, on a systematic research and cataloguing as well as microfilming of newspapers, state by state. The project is expected to finish by 2007 with the two states with the highest newspaper concentration, California und New York.⁶ The records are added to the CONSER file of the Library of Congress while the marketing is managed by OCLC.

– Finland and Sweden conducted a model project for the provision of digitised newspapers on the internet (TIDEN).⁷

– Austria started a digitisation project after having catalogued the extensive newspaper holdings in Vienna.

– Estonia is running a digitisation project.

A number of libraries in Germany started an initiative together with archives to follow the example of the mentioned countries; but alas! the point in time was ill chosen – with the current stictures on public budgets and the heavy demand for support of scientific projects the DFG did not see fit to accept such a not exactly cheap application. Only a regional Bavarian project received funding, and this

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⁴See http://www.newsplan.co.uk
⁶For the United States Newspaper Program see: http://www.loc.gov/preserv/usnmprr.html and http://neh.gov/projects/usnp.html
may serve as a model for further activities which may perhaps be started in other federal states.

So with regard to newspaper work Germany is still a developing country, and the idea of the IFLA Section on Newspapers was to promote professional newspaper activities in Germany and foster cooperation in the whole region by arranging for this international conference.

Work of the Section

The IFLA Newspaper Section existed for many years as a small but active Round Table on Newspapers and was only in 2002 promoted to the rank of a section, as part of a wider restructuring of IFLA (International Federation of Library Associations). Its objectives are:

– Initiating and realising projects within the IFLA Medium Term Programme

– Organising meetings separately from IFLA Conference, such as seminars, colloquiaums, workshops, and poster sessions

– Publishing a newsletter.

Among its latest activities are

– a highly successful even if small hands-on workshop on newspaper digitisation, conducted by Helsinki University (Center for Microfilming and Digitisation, located in Mikkeli), in June 2003

– the publication of *Guidelines for Newspaper Preservation Microfilming*. The Hague 1996. (IFLA Professional Report; 49)


– and the preparation of a *Guidance for the Best Practice of Digitisation from Preservation Microfilms* (on the Section’s website).

\(^7\)http://tiden.kb.se
- the organisation of a session on Newspapers and Copyright at the IFLA General conference in Berlin, 2003.


The Section welcomes both membership and informal cooperation in order to promote awareness of newspaper issues and to foster cooperation in the field worldwide.

Among its current projects and plans are:

- the preparation of a session on the press of Latin America at the forthcoming International Congress on Libraries and Information in Buenos Aires

- a survey of African newspapers

- the preparation of a newspaper handbook

- a listing and evaluation of internet resources for newspaper work

We sincerely hope that our present meeting at the Shanghai tushuguan will encourage Chinese colleagues to cooperate with their international partners in solving the intricate problems connected with newspapers – collection building, cataloguing, access, copyright, electronic versions, preservation and archiving.