

**LIBRARIES – RELOADED:  
THE JOINED ADVENTURES OF TWO MARINE SCIENCE LIBRARIES**

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**Abstract:** In January 2004 the Institute of Marine Sciences Kiel and the GEOMAR Research Center merged to form one of the biggest marine science institutes in Germany, the IFM-GEOMAR, Leibniz Institute of Marine Sciences (at Kiel University).

While the GEOMAR-Library was a small research library without official opening hours and without a classification system, the IFM-Library has always been open for the public, mostly used by students and had a very old, simple classification system which was by now out-of-date.

In addition to the usual problems of the merging of two institutes on two different banks of the Kiel Fjord, this was a big challenge for the librarians to accept.

So far a lot has been accomplished: A new classification system was compiled, a new library software was set up, new websites were designed etc.

While this task started out as just lot of work it soon became apparent that it was also a great chance to revalue the status quo, the beginning of a wonderful co-operation and an exciting start into a new future.

Once upon a time there were two libraries, each living on the opposite site of a Fjord. The older library covered all of the marine sciences, while the younger one collected literature about marine geology. The “Powers that be” waited until the young one became 16 years old and therefore reached the age to be married.

But as soon as they where joined the libraries discovered, that there were really, really big differences between them. And so, trying to avoid a fate that hits too many couples nowadays, they decided to actually work together to make this marriage a success...

The *Institute of Marine Sciences Library* had about 95.000 media items, 1 post for a Librarian and 1 Library Assistant. The Library Computer System was “Alephino”, a “baby” of the big worldwide known Library Software Aleph. The IFM-Library had a self-made shelf classification which was in desperate need of revision. The IFM-Library was open to the public, its users were scientists, students as well as school students and retired persons. The opening hours were Monday to Friday from 9am till 6 pm. The media items were circulating. The IFM-Library charged overdue fines.

The *GEOMAR Library* had about 25.000 media items and 1 post for a Librarian (divided between two librarians). The Library Computer System was “Libero”. The library had no shelf classification system; the books were shelved in alphabetical order. The GEOMAR Library was mainly a research library for the scientists who were given a key to the library, with no official opening hours; the media items were non-circulating and so they weren’t in need of any fines.

Both libraries had their own library regulations and their own websites.

Our first meetings in the beginning of the year 2004 were, of course, quite exciting. I had never before worked in a team; my new colleague were in a similar situation:

Heidi, the original librarian, had been away on maternity leave and Angelika had worked alone in the Geomar-Library for very long years. Now Heidi was back and we all had to find our way within the new, larger library. Where in the past we had made all our own decision, suddenly we had to discuss everything first. After some difficulties, suddenly we saw light on the horizon: How wonderful not to be the only one to bear the responsibility! And how great to be able to discuss things and to get input from somebody, who was expert in the same subject! And suddenly we had time – more time than we ever had before, because we could divide the tasks.

We decided to become a leadership team: each of us decided where her main interests lay and so we finally split the tasks: Heidi would be responsible for the library law; Angelika would deal with the information overload of the subjects “open access” and “institutional repositories” and I would become the contact person for the national and international contacts.

But first of all we had to take the first steps towards a new IFM-GEOMAR-Library:

1. New websites for the library would have to be constructed
2. Decide for a combined Library software

3. Decision for a Classification system
4. New Library regulations
5. The Space requirements had to be checked
6. A new library building?

### **Website**

The newly formed computer department decided to use Typo 3 as the content management system for our new websites. With this requirement my colleagues and I decided to have a closed meeting in my garden and came up with a plan how to proceed and serious sunburn.

First of all we deliberately deleted all our old files from our former websites. Then we talked to various users of the library, discussed what we ourselves would like to see and finally managed to design our own website.

Of course it is still – and I'm afraid it will be forever - “under construction”, but we are quite satisfied. We got a positive feedback from our users and once in a while we plan to ask for more and new input. Right now we are discussing something like an “electronic bulletin board” on the Intranet, because our employees work in different buildings and we do not have the possibility to just pin a paper on the wall for everybody to read. On this board we want people to discuss new books, advertise for private events, sell unused concert tickets or just trying to get a ride somewhere.

### **Software Selection**

We decided not to choose one of the existing library software but rather join the GBV Common Library Network

The GBV is the Common Library Network of the 7 German federal states. The head office of the GBV is situated in Göttingen. All University, College and governmental sponsored research libraries within the territory of the participating federal states as well as the Berlin State Library (SBBPK), many public libraries and special libraries are members of the GBV. All together more than 770 academic, public and research institute libraries are actively participating in GBV.

The work of GBV is characterized by the permanent effort to adjust the library network to the changing goals and expanding perspectives of modern library work. Based upon the shared cataloguing service as the fundamental task of the GBV, the responsibilities quickly expanded to offering online-interlibrary loan, a module for acquisitions, circulation, a periodical holding system, and support for the local library systems as well as end-user services.

The GBV uses records retrieved from external databases, for example OCLC, and the data of the GBV are added into the WorldCat database, which is a worldwide library cooperative build up by OCLC.

Both our former library software cost us about 8.000 Euros annually and we were pleased to discover, that the GBV would only take about 4.000 Euros each year and a single payment of 5.000 Euros. I had heard from other librarians in Kiel that the Government of Schleswig-Holstein wanted to encourage libraries to take part in the GBV. So I contacted the appropriate authority and told them about our plan to change our library system. You cannot imagine my surprise, when they told me, that they would cover the annual costs for us!!! Wow – and this in times of financial distress!

I went to the contact person and we had a cup of coffee and talked about the implementation plan. I was about to leave when the woman suddenly said: “Oh, I just had an idea: what would you think if we would finance the single payment for the installation of the system and the data conversion as well?” WOW! Of course you can imagine that she knocked the stuffing out of me! I thought about her idea for a very long split second and then I gave her a bear hug and just in time stopped myself promising to benefit her in my will...

Can you believe it? We got a new library system, our data were converted and we didn't have to pay anything! Not 1 Euro! The Ministry did even bear the expenses for the system training!

So we signed the contract and sent our data to the GBV head office. They promised us that the data would be converted within a few months – well, as you can imagine it took them 6 month. But finally they sent us some test data. We looked at them, and to admit we only understood half of it. There were numbers and characters we have never seen before and could not understand because we didn't get a legend. But nevertheless, we were eager and excited, and thought everything looked fine – we definitely could read the titles of the books.

I know what you think now: oh dear, these stupid, stupid people – they really believe that computer experts know anything about how the librarians brain works. Of course since almost two years now we are paying for our simple-mindedness: All our journals, every single volume we had catalogued, were converted without the signature; all our articles (about 6000) were converted without the link to the journal and many of our journals themselves were identified as multivolume monographs. I do not have to go into details about our daily work at the office now, do I? Nevertheless we finally had our common

catalogue, we now have just 1 circulation system, and our users are very happy. Which, of course, is the most important task for librarians.

Another problem we had to solve where the different classification systems our libraries used. The users who changed between our buildings found it of course very confusing, to have to find the books they were looking for in different classified arrangements.

### **Shelf Classification System**

I remember we looked through thousands of library classification systems: some were too detailed, some where not detailed enough; some were written for very small libraries with only one or two subjects of the many we cover, some were written for university libraries and couldn't be adapted to our library collection. The so-called "Basis Classification System" used by the GBV is not detailed enough as well. So why, you might wonder, didn't you just ask the other marine science libraries in Germany, you stupid girls?

Well, let me tell you what the first library answered to our question concerning their classification system:

"We have a very old system, it was self-made – oh my god, you are not seriously considering using our system, are you???"

And the second library said:

"We have a very old system, it was self-made – oh my god, you are not planning to use ours, are you???"

And the third...

Well, we have about 20 marine science libraries in "GAMSLIC" (the German Association of Marine Science Libraries and Information Centers) and I do not want to bore you by repeating this answer 18 more times. I am sure you get the picture.

So what did we do?

We decided to develop our own classification system. We used the help of our scientists, students, our knowledge of our books and our "common sense" and finally created a first version of our new classification system written in German and English.

Right now we are changing the class mark of every single of our 125.000 media items into the new system and not only learn a lot but change the classification every other day. But it works, our users appreciate to have a new up-to-date shelf classification, and they find the publications they need easier then before and mostly without help.

**I told you before about the different regulations we had in our libraries. Well...**

### **New Library Regulations**

Sorry, but we haven't had the time for that so we are currently using our old regulations. This is kind of odd of course, but until now nobody complained - we are lucky to have very understanding users....

### **Space Requirements**

In January this year I was asked to become a member of the planning committee for the new IFM-GEOMAR building on the other side of the Kiel Fjord. I was given a week to come up with a plan for the new library and we decided to ask for enough space to be able to create our "dream library": enough space for open access shelving of our whole library collection, several cozy lounges for our readers, a variety of carrels with enough computer terminals, group work rooms, a cafeteria. We figured out that we would need about 2000 square meters! We haven't heard from the head of the planning committee – I think he hasn't quite overcome the shock, yet....

### **Summary:**

Okay, what have done until now?

- Websites: new websites for the library were constructed
- Decision for a combined Library software: GBV
- Compilation of a new Classification system
- Space requirements: the space requirements were checked, keeping in mind that the new modern library should be an open-access library, with enough space for computer work stations, room for study groups, reading areas, etc.
- We still have to write the new Library regulations.
- We want our new Library to be a research library but open to the public as well;
- We want our users not only to borrow books but to feel welcome to stay, read, write, research and to discuss
- We welcome our users to eat and drink in the library – they would do it at home anyhow...
- We **do not** want our scientists to have their own keys to the library – we plan to have excessive opening hours that will cover the need of our users;
- We want to use overdue fines to convince the scientists that they shall either return their books or renew their loans in time;

And finally....

- Users are generally allowed to sleep, provided they do not snore.
- Unfortunately, libraries close each day, and you will be asked to leave at this time. So you will not be able to make use of a library as a cheap rent alternative...

### **A new Library?**

In spring this year our directorate asked us to make a statement why we think that in times of electronic publishing our institute still needs a library. The most commonly used phrase is: "Why do I need a library when I can find everything on the Internet?"

We are, of course, aware that we are not the only library which is confronted with this challenge. Many people in Germany worship the Internet, believing that it will solve all our problems and that everything published there is the truth. Since the publishers provide their articles online, the scientists think that libraries are dispensable and their budgets should be used to order the papers directly. I am sure we all know about this problem and almost every librarian nowadays has to deal with it one way or another.

Considering this development we will have to reconsider our tasks and strategies. The "typical librarian" or, as Kara Jesella recently wrote in the New York Times: "Librarians? Aren't they supposed to be bespectacled women with a love of classic books and a perpetual annoyance with talkative patrons the ultimate humorless shushers?" isn't existing anymore. We are now changing to become fighters, brave, strong and determined.

We fight for the right for free information, for access to information for everybody with or without Internet access, with or without money, with or without connections. We are the "Pirates of the Knowledge", the "Keepers of the Treasures" and we are the ones who help people to find their way through the information overflow and the misguidance of the electronic information.

The End