

## The University library of Heidelberg: from tradition to future

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Just everything had been so different during the golden sixties and seventies:

- along with an increasing economical power of the libraries the number of different print media expanded,
- new methods of organisation and the construction of functional library buildings helped improve library services,
- the increasing usage of libraries was met by an evident increase in personnel and additional improvements of working conditions through automation.

Although even the golden past had never been as easy as it might seem now looking back, in the sixties and seventies librarians were still able to meet greater demands by improvements in the areas of architecture, personnel, and budget. Hence, greater pressure coming from an increased number of users and books could be compensated for by EDP.

None of the conveniences of those golden times were left when I started in my job at the university library of Heidelberg in 1979. At that time the situation in Heidelberg was not encouraging at all.

The university had tried to escape the density of the old town by establishing a modern university campus including a university Library in the Neuenheimer Feld. However, this trial had not been accomplished; the plans for a university library in that area had failed twice and had then been dismissed. Modernisation of services and increase in personnel had also been delayed in prospect of a new building. The only logical extension of the university-library had failed. Only in the end of 1978 a new building in the north of the library was opened. So, in the year of 1979, the greatest university-library in the state of Baden-Württemberg had comparatively small amounts of equipment, means, and staff.

In that situation the following steps became inevitable:

- 1.) Renovation of the old building, which was started in the end of 1978.
- 2.) Moving of about 2,2 Mio. books to a branch-library for Sciences in the Neuenheimer Feld and to the building of a former cigarette factory now used as deposit library. By

now some 86 % of the library stock is stored outside the main library building. (Figure 1).

- 3.) Automation of circulation: only automation could help to reasonably administrate the library now consisting of two branches and threeparted stock facilities.

The merits of the new situation were:

- the branch-library only dedicated to Sciences and Medicine brought the university-library into closer contact with the users in these fields.
- the renovation of the old library building gave the opportunity to reconstruct as well as reorganize the whole working structure of the library.

J. Wille, the first director working in the library building, wrote the following lines to the minister of culture from Karlsruhe, Baden in the year of 1911: "This library building is now known to experts as an example of how *not* to build a library." There are two parts of the building:

the castle-like southern wing; the former center for users and staff. In this wing were the catalogues, the reading rooms, the loan department, the acquisition, the cataloguing department, and the exhibition room. In 1816 the pope returned about 900 German manuscripts of the "Bibliotheca Palatina" to Heidelberg; in 1888 the famous "Codex Manesse" could be bought from the National Library in Paris – so the university-library became somewhat like a national monument – the building shows this character in its southern part. You'll find two floors in this part, whereas at the same height you'll find five floors in the three stock-wings surrounding a yard. As customary in Germany those stock-floors were closed stacks.

How did we rebuild the library? (Figure 2)

In a first step we reconstructed the stocks. By a flight of new stairs we connected the three floors users can reach from the first castle-floor. Now they are open-access-stacks with a capacity of about 400 000 volumes. There users will find the acquisitions made in the field of Humanities within the last 15 years. There are other floors in the stack-wing which are connected with the second castle-floor. Those floors are read-

# DISTRIBUTION OF BOOKS ACCORDING TO PLACES OF SHELVING

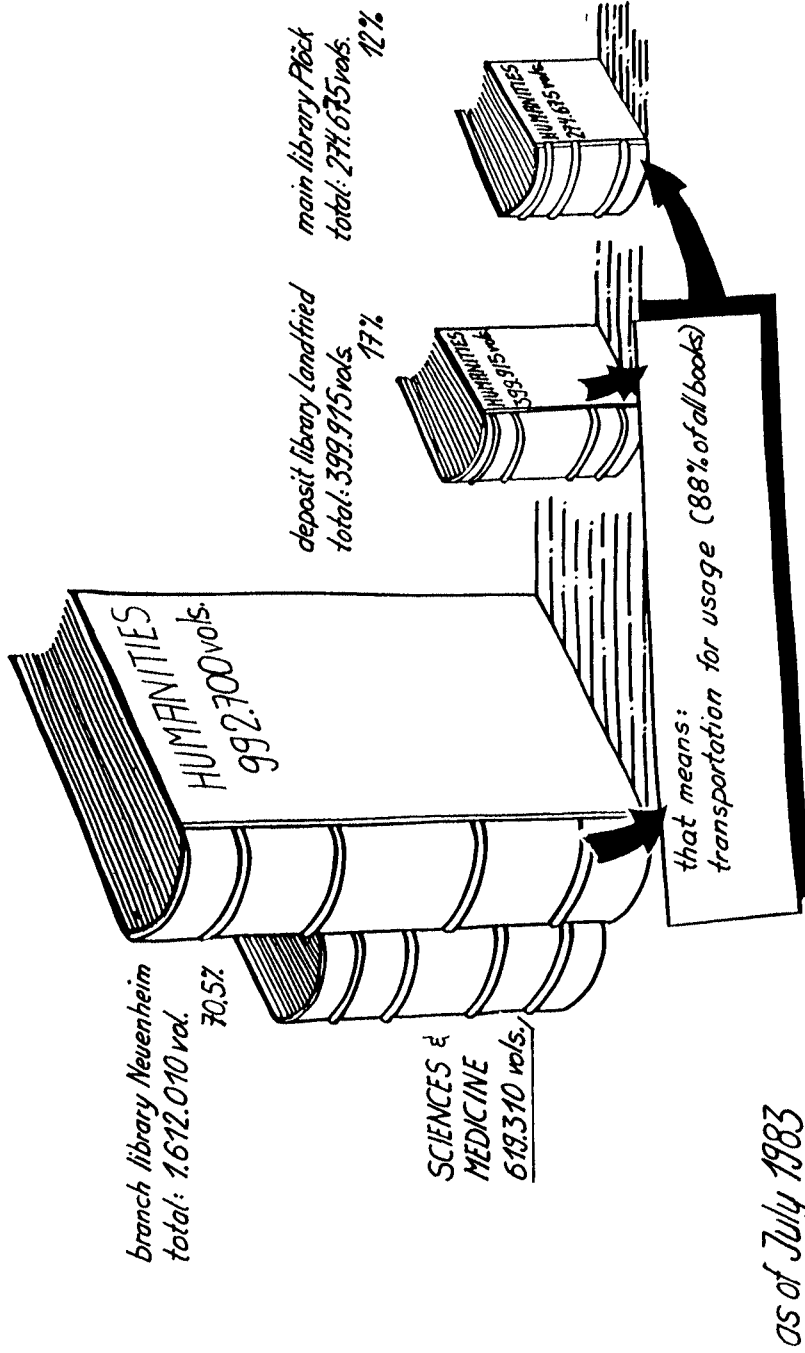


Figure 1

ing-rooms. After the first step of reconstruction we were able to open these new open access and reading facilities in 1982. A remarkable increase of circulation and use of the reading rooms was the result. (Figure 3 + 4) At this moment the last part of the renovation is almost terminated. We hope to be able to move in early 1988.

The information-center will be located there, where users can receive information about all books in the university, or better, in the city of Heidelberg. We contrived new space using the old heating cellar and constructing additional partition stories into the old catalogue- and reading rooms. Now we have five floors for the Heidelberg Union Catalogue, the

catalogue of the university library and the bibliographies as well as the printed catalogues of other libraries. We prepared the floors for automation: the online-public-access-catalogue will be in the information-center, too.

It was one of the positive aspects of the division of the library that automation was inevitable: only if we could connect the different loan desks and the stacks in the three buildings by a computer, the overview needed about the library holdings was possible. In the beginning, the library used the computer of the university computer center. After some years of dissatisfying experience the library was able to acquire its own computer. But this equipment is set up in the university computer

center and is connected with the university's main computer. Thereby all institutes linked with the university computer center have access to the data of the library-system, too. By now more than 70 institute libraries are using this new library service. Therefore, the university of Heidelberg, the oldest in West Germany, has the possibility of constructing a modern local library network. Currently our library system is linked with the Southwest Catalogue Network (Südwestverbund) working as a pilot library in this network. Together with the automated circulation system we started retrospective cataloguing using the tape-service of the Deutsche Bibliothek. Original cataloguing was prepared for the most used books of the older stocks. We hope to have more staff in the future to establish this system for our old library – an undertaking which will be our biggest business for the next decade.

One of the most eminent experiences in reconstructing the old library was the fact that, afterwards, one seems to have less space than before, because additional requirements are made towards modern or modernized buildings, which did not exist eighty years ago. Fire safety, for instance, had to be met by the installation of new emergency stairs; some parts of the library lacked a heating system, the installation of which certainly made us lose space. Also transportation had to be guaranteed – for instance box conveyors and elevators. Additional struts for static safety aggravated the distribution of shelves. I share these and other negative experiences with you, because I very much believe that the following will be the future of many old libraries in the next few decades: rather than constructing new buildings, we will have to reconstruct old libraries or other old buildings.

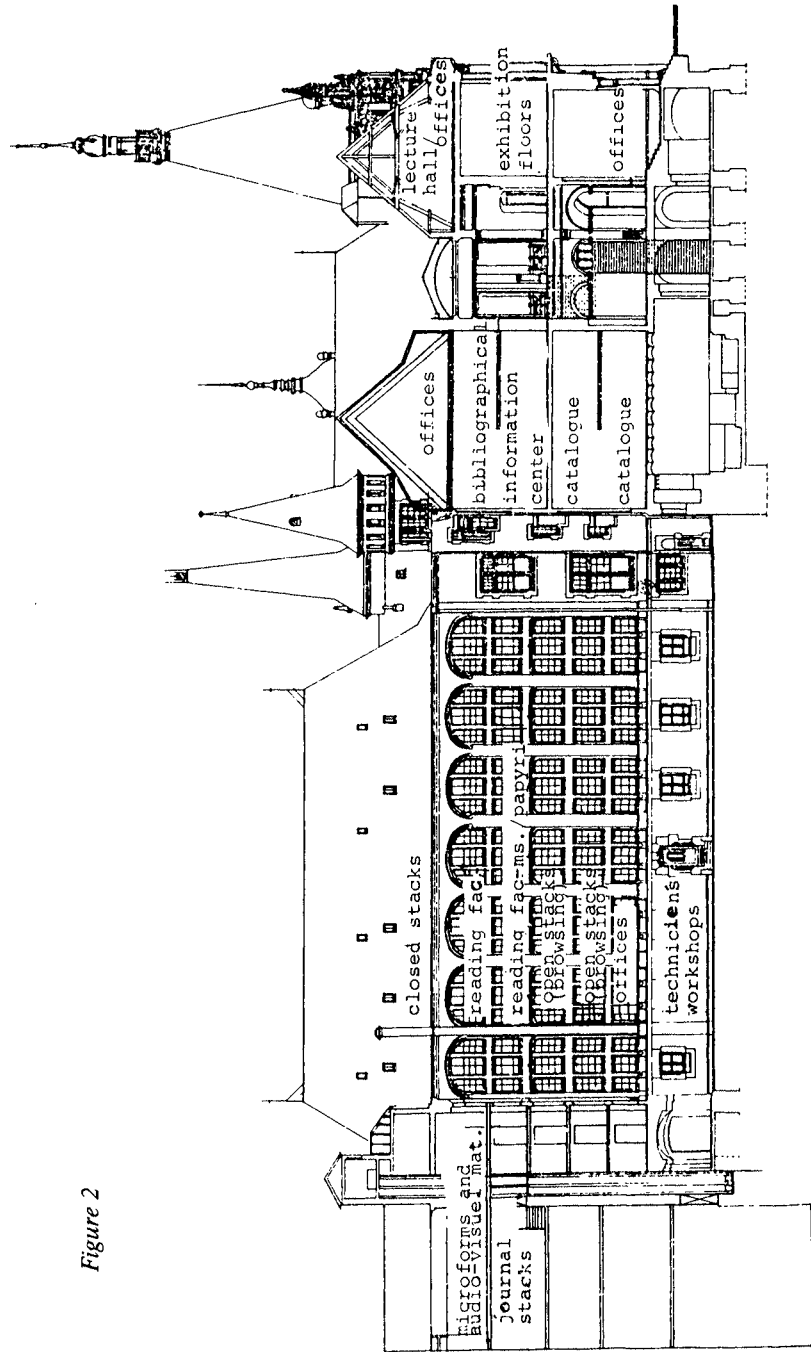


Figure 2

usage envisaged after completion of renovation in the stacks- and castle-floors of the university-library.

# Number of check-outs

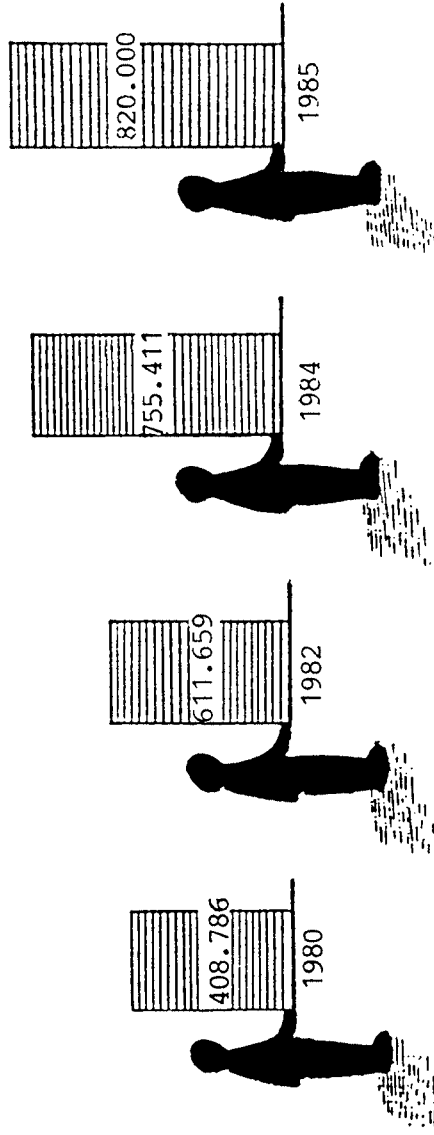


Figure 3

Here I would like to give you one urgent advice: if possible, one should try to arrange for a substitute building, for it will be necessary to unfold construction works in small steps, which enormously lengthens the process. In Heidelberg a decade will have passed till we can ban construction noises from the old building. What that means only someone who had to suffer through it himself can understand.

Advantages and disadvantages lie closely together: our building only provides air-conditioning in areas with manuscripts or EDP. Our staff will esteem it highly. We managed to preserve a monument of the time of historicism and revitalised it. Our building has always been relatively small. It is now still too small, but decreasing numbers of students will not make it inappropriate as some of the big libraries of the last decade.

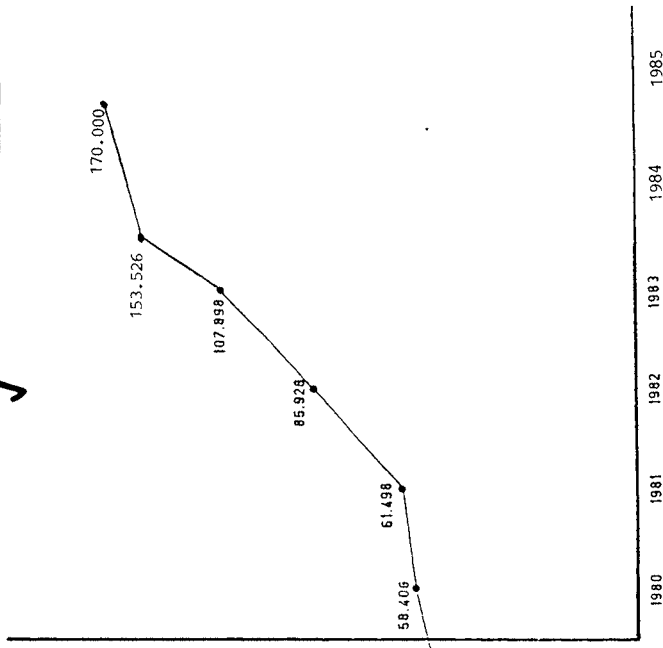
The disadvantages of an old building could only be turned into advantages by creating new space for books in an underground area. On July 8, 1986 the first ground was broken for this

project. The end of our unsatisfactory transportation situation only now becomes visible. (Figure 5)

One essential task of the reconstruction was adjusting the storage for the collection of manuscripts and exhibition rooms, to modern conservatory experiences. The center-piece of the exhibition facilities will be an air-conditioned room with the famous Manesse manuscript. This room will include a special safe for the most precious manuscripts of the library. The stocks for manuscripts are air-conditioned, too. The only problem is one of climatic difference between the stocks and the reading room for manuscripts, which is not air-conditioned. Henceforth, we try to concentrate usage of manuscripts on microforms or copies and to allow the usage of originals in exceptional cases only in the air-conditioned area.

Since 1959 the university library of Heidelberg has had some positive experiences with the microfilming and recopying of the original Palatina library. The catalogue of medical manus-

# Number of users (Library Add down)



cripts of the "Bibliotheca Palatina" in the Vatican Library by Ludwig Schuba is a significant result of this work. In the course of the preparation for the "Palatina exhibition" it became obvious how much more difficult it was to get copies of printed works of the 15th and 16th centuries from German libraries. That is the reason why we aspire the production of microforms of the printed books of the Palatina, too. The help of the Vatican Library, especially given by its Cardinal Librarian Stickler and Prefect Professor Boyle, visibly encouraged us.

To be able to retrieve printed stocks of the original Palatina through copies would mean an extremely important step towards the future of the university library of Heidelberg as a research center as well as a user center of the different library facilities in our old university.

Figure 4

Figure 5

