Do We Need Libraries Now and in the Future?
Remarks on the Role of a German Library and Its Information Infrastructure in the Field of Asian studies and Beyond

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Abstract

This paper will not discuss the well known and skeptical question on the future role of libraries in general. Instead it tries to draw a landscape of a specific German library and collection which is partly funded by the German Research Foundation and whose aim is to provide the best services possible for the German academic community. Service here means access to any kind of information in the whole field of East Asian studies by providing access to books, journals, newspapers and all kind of e-contents to the German user community, which consists mainly of professors, teaching staff, students etc. of East Asian studies in Germany. The collection is limited to the humanities and social sciences.

The traditional understanding of our role was to select (research) material from the large international markets in Asia and everywhere else and to offer these resources to the German research community. In the past we have already developed new licensing strategies and policies that allow us to offer also e-access to content that has been licensed or purchased by the Berlin State Library. This means that every researcher in Germany can apply for access to a huge digital library and collection. All services are channeled through CrossAsia (http://crossasia.org/), our electronic platform. We are convinced that it would be a mistake to merely computerize existing services. We know that granting access (which also means working on clever and sustainable license agreements with the copyright holders) is not common in the national and international library world, but we realized that we now have to further develop into a new direction: We need to plan, to conceptualize, and to set up an

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integrated text archive which will on the one hand allow us to administer our licensed e-contents, but also will enable us to create new channels to the content which was and still is normally only accessible through the gateways and platforms of the vendors. The planning of the integrated text archive shall constitute the basis for any support of the Digital Humanities on a national level. Different aspects like collection building policy, developing and adjusting licensing strategies, data management, copyright and their abidance, developing appropriate authentication mechanisms, data and text layout recognition as well as OCR, automated text structuring mechanisms etc. are crucial. It is obvious that this work cannot and should not be developed by one institution. Chinese contents do not play a major role in any German library or information infrastructure – but it is the daily business in Chinese or Taiwanese libraries and their information infrastructures. Texts needed in Germany are also requested by other international libraries and information infrastructures all over the world, especially by those in East Asia. Why do we – as one particular institution in Germany – need to create our own and maybe not standardized platform for Chinese texts while Taiwanese libraries have the same request. It doesn’t lead to better solutions when we multiply the same work in our libraries. Is there any way to plan a kind of standardized internationally distributed text archive system that allows exchange, access, and delivery of content by strict copyright compliance and to develop new business models which might mean sharing power and costs?

International cooperation in planning and developing such strategies as well as in developing and maintaining new IT infrastructures would be a perfect test bed to create new technical access modes by guaranteeing copyright and access modes.
圖書館在當今和未來是否還有存在的必要？從一所德國圖書館談資訊服務之於東亞研究的作用

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摘 要

本文探討在越來越多數位化研究材料的環境下，柏林國立圖書館如何藉由資訊技術提供學者更好的東亞研究資訊服務。我們認為僅僅把服務電腦化，對下一世代的研究者是不夠的，圖書館應該要規畫一個新的取用研究材料的方式，不能只倚賴資料庫廠商提供的系統，我們建議一個整合性的數位全文平台，且認為這才是更適合數位人文學者的使用方式。

這當中有許多重要的議題需要討論，包括收錄資料的策略、發展新的授權模式、資料的安全性控管、著作權的保護、安全的使用者認證等。我們尤其希望跟與會者討論：如何透過國際合作，建立跨國的分散式全文平台以支援數位研究材料的遠距存取、遞送，並同時能維持嚴格的著作權控管？如何讓這樣的架構能永續營運下去？我們呼籲台灣的圖書館及館藏單位應該在這樣的規劃中領頭。

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