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LP21_05

Name

Zoe Honigberg

Title of Paper

Bibliotheken und Gemeinschaften: A Study of Public Libraries and Communities in Germany

Class Year

Senior

Date Research Undertaken

Spring 2021

Citation Style Used

Chicago

Affiliated Course

German Studies Individual Study (GER 492)

Faculty Name

Professor Suzuko Knott

Student Major

Architectural Studies and German Studies double-major, Sociology minor

Narrative Questions

- 1. Describe how you came to choose your topic, specifically noting any pre-research that you did. What sources did you use in this pre-research? To what extent did you consult with librarians, faculty, or others? How did this pre-research lead you to your topic?**

When I learned I could not pursue my CISLA summer internship in-person, I set up a meeting with Professor Andrea Lanoux, the director of CISLA, to discuss my options. I had accepted an internship with a community engagement organization in Berlin, Germany, and I knew the organization was doing a project about public libraries. Professor Lanoux helped me consider ways to gather data and research for the organization remotely—looking at public library sites, talking to librarians and other specialists, and scouring texts and other media to learn whatever I could about public libraries. Over the course of the summer, I built a foundation of theoretical knowledge about public libraries and their relationships with communities using North American case studies. One of the things I read about was how public libraries are supposed to be ‘free for all’ spaces. I came across a controversial situation where the Seattle Public Library allowed a TERF organization to use one of its auditoriums. By hosting this type of organization, the SPL was inherently excluding the trans community. However, denying the TERF organization access would also have been a form of exclusion. Reading about the situation got me thinking about how libraries serve as public spaces that intend to be welcoming and free to all, but yet achieving free access for all is not really feasible. This semester, I am looking to explore this idea of ‘free for all’ in the context of German public libraries using the foundational “pre-research”/research of my summer internship.

- 2. Describe your process of finding information for your project. Note specifically the tools you used to undertake your research, as well as the specific search strategies you used within these tools. (Note: “Ebsco,” being an umbrella vendor, is not a specific enough response when identifying tools; listing the “library database” is also an unacceptably vague answer. Specific tools include JSTOR, America: History & Life, Web of Science, etc., along with OneSearch, the new library system.)**

As I mentioned above, Professor Lanoux suggested I look at public library sites, talk with librarians and specialists in the field, and study texts and other media to build a foundation of understanding about public libraries. Ashley Hanson was able to provide some useful PDF resources, meaning I did not have to conduct many open-ended searches to find additional theoretical information. Other sources I looked at this summer included blog posts (I found the author by listening to a virtual conference), a documentary suggested to me about the New York Public Library, newspaper articles, and architectural renderings of libraries—sources I am able to use in my research this semester as well. Ashley has been guiding me through my research since the summer and has taught me how to use many of the databases (i.e. JSTOR, WorldCat, Google Scholar, and OneSearch) more efficiently than I knew how to before. When searching for resources to read during winter break, she guided me to OneSearch and then Google Scholar where we searched things like “germany library”, “german public libraries”, and “germany public libraries role society” to collect sources. I have been using WorldCat this week to find resources from a “Further Reading” chapter of another resource, where I can use authors and titles (sometimes truncated titles) to search and request through interlibrary loan.

3. Describe your process of evaluating the resources you found. How did you make decisions about which resources you would use, and which you wouldn't? What kinds of questions did you ask yourself about resources in order to determine whether they were worthy of inclusion?

When evaluating resources, I look at the title and year of publication first. The title often hints at the resource's subject matter and can give valuable insight into the perspective it will take. Then I look at the year it was published because, depending on the type of resource it is, it may be outdated, have a more recent version, or not be relevant anymore. I am mostly focusing on resources written since 2000, as the roles of public libraries have changed drastically with the evolution of technology. If the title and year of publication seem satisfactory, I skim over the abstract, read the first section, or do a "control F" search for a keyword (i.e. "german", "public", "public libraries", etc) to see if the resource focuses on what I am looking for. To evaluate a resource's relevance, I ask myself questions like: "Do I have a resource already that focuses on this topic?" "If this is an older resource, will it give me the perspective I am looking for for the time period, or is there something more recent that covers something similar?" "If the resource is long, are there sections or chapters that I should focus on?" Once I have done a preliminary deduction that a resource is worth using, I will add it to my annotated bibliography in the proper citation style, adding a few sentences about how the resource can benefit my project.