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# “In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity“: Experiences from German public libraries

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Municipal Libraries  
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The logo for the German Library Association (DLBV) consists of the lowercase letters 'dlbv' in a white, sans-serif font. The letters are positioned on a dark blue horizontal bar that spans the width of the slide.

Deutscher  
Bibliotheksverband e.V.

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# 1. German public (municipal) libraries

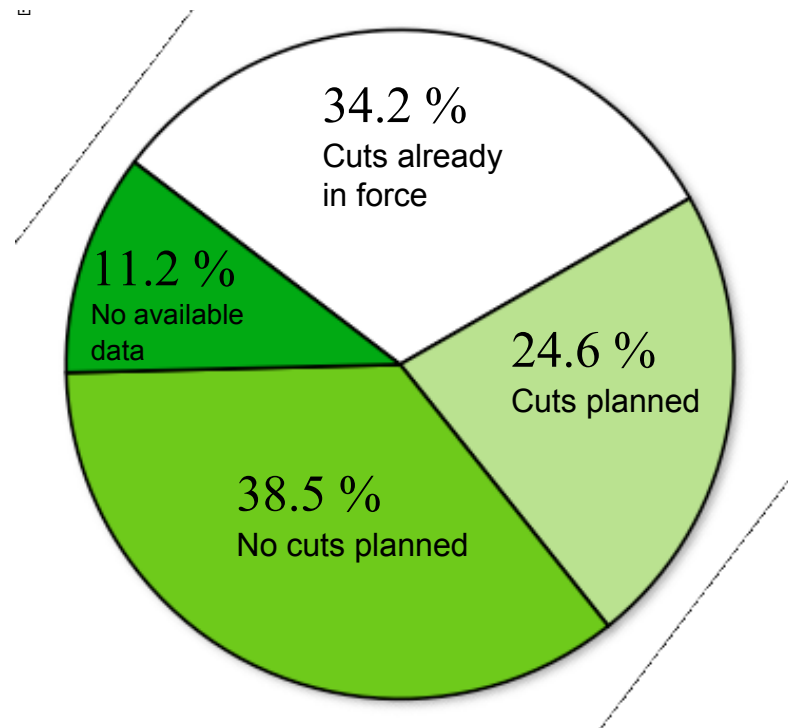
- **82 Mio** inhabitants in Germany
- **8.256** public library systems / **9.898** service points
- **2.113** with full-time staff (**6.143** p.-t.s. or volunteers)
- **124 Mio** media units are held by our public libraries
- **7,98 Mio** are registered public library users
- **124 Mio** visits to our public libraries each year
- **378 Mio** media units are borrowed by users each year

## 2. Funding of public (municipal) libraries

- Public libraries are regarded as public services funded mainly by municipalities
- sources of revenue for municipal governments: share of general taxes, own business tax and property tax
- In the 80s, after unification 1989 and again in current economic crisis: high pressure on budget due to loss of business taxes and increase of welfare payments

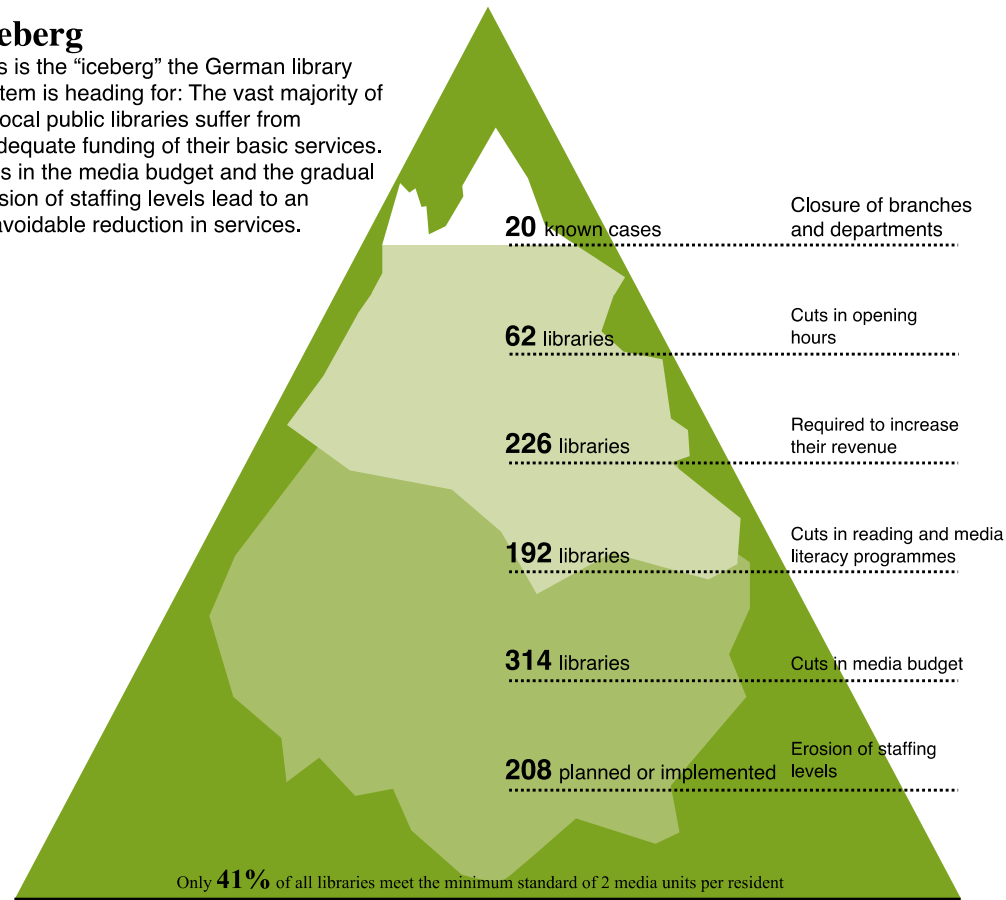
# Financial situation of public libraries 2010

- Question: “Has your library been affected by funding cuts?”



## Iceberg

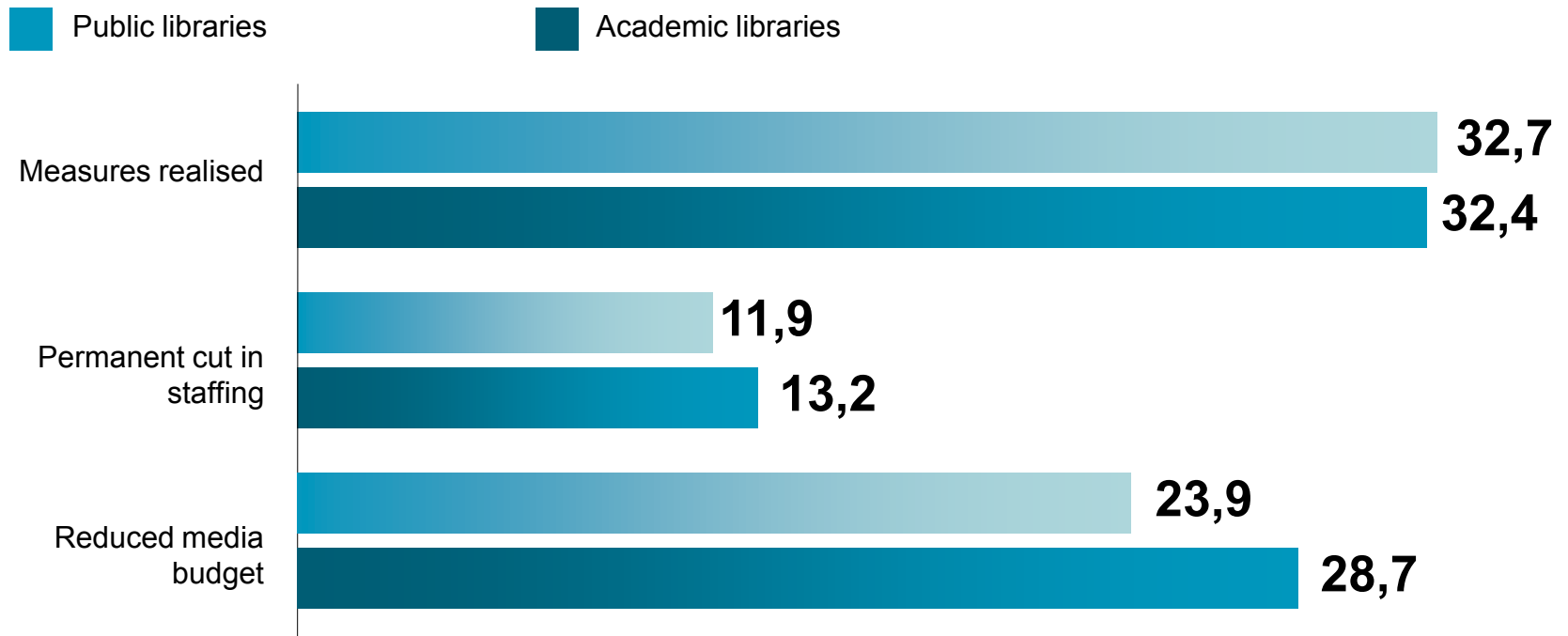
This is the "iceberg" the German library system is heading for: The vast majority of all local public libraries suffer from inadequate funding of their basic services. Cuts in the media budget and the gradual erosion of staffing levels lead to an unavoidable reduction in services.



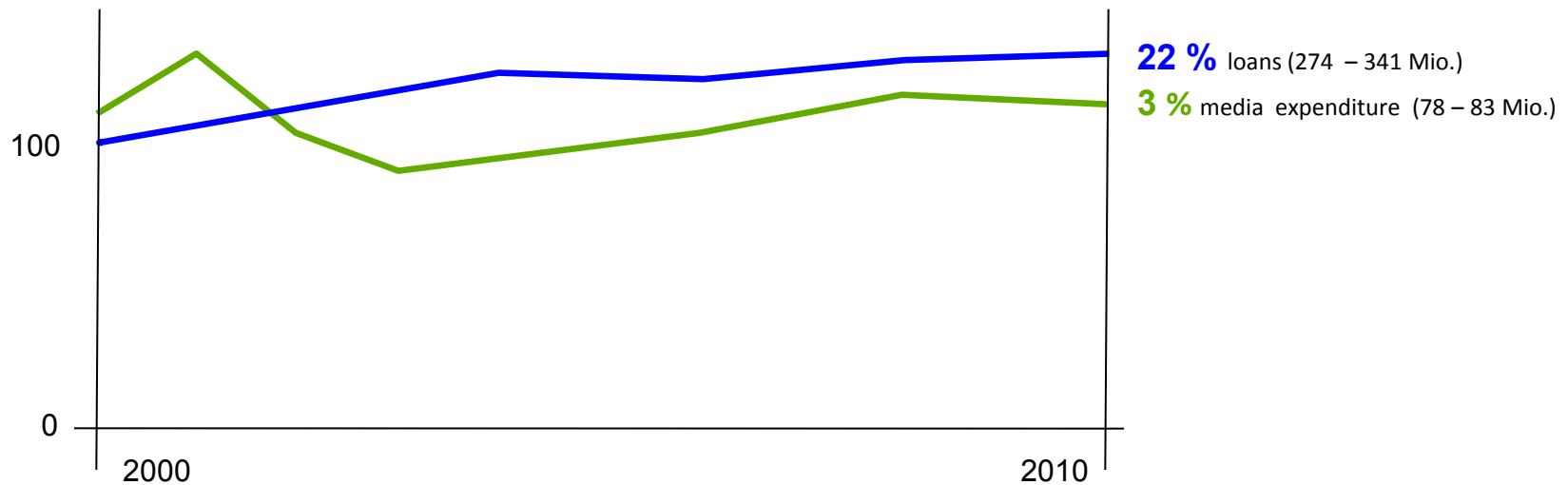
Source: Survey conducted by the dbv in April/may 2010 among 1284 libraries in municipalities and communities of all sizes; 907 questionnaires were completed.

# Financial situation in 2011

## fiscal consolidation measures in percent



# Public (municipal) libraries with full-time staff: 2000-2010





# Challenges for public libraries

- Limited and decreasing resources from municipalities
- Increased use of and increased demand of services by public libraries
- Repositioning of public libraries in digital age
- Dissemination of knowledge on value of public libraries in digital age

# How to improve position of public library in difficult financial times

- Many libraries suffer from cuts.
- Every library can improve its position with creativity, own initiative, solidarity and cooperation with other local institutions, good public relations and some knowledge of alternative funding possibilities.
- Ongoing discussion: shall we charge library users for public library services?

# How to improve position of public library in difficult financial times

- Our consistent striving for improvement is probably best summed-up by a phrase that is sometimes ascribed to the ancient Greek philosopher Plato: “necessity is the mother of invention”.

### 3. Alternative funding of library services

- New public management in the 1980s: many municipalities decentralized their resource responsibilities, some libraries are run as “municipal undertaking”: possibility to keep extra income
- Define core services (free for all, funded by public taxes)
- Identify alternative funding sources for additional services

## 3. Alternative funding of library services:

### Fees

- annual fee for library users, 10-25 Euro (children, seniors and welfare recipients: very often free or reduced)
- Overdue fees per day/item: e.g. 0,25 Euro
- Internet usage: e.g. 0,50 Euro to 1 Euro/hour
- Bestseller service: e.g. 1 -2,50 Euro/2 weeks
- Rental fee for rooms to outside users
- Entrance fee for events

### 3. Alternative funding of library services: Fees for services offered on the market

- Internet courses in the library
  - Example Cologne Public Library
    - Different courses (beginners, advanced, children, seniors), for 5-8 people, 2 hours, 20 Euro
  - Example Würzburg Public library
    - Course for beginners, 2 hours, 4 Euro

## 3. Alternative funding of library services: Fees for services offered on the market

- Research service for companies
  - Example of Stuttgart Public Library “Recherche a la carte”
    - E.g. Company profile 5 Euro
  - Example of Cologne Public Library:
    - Special for Job Candidates (Company profile, job application handbook, 7,50 Euro)
    - Topic research: 30 minutes for 15 Euro

### 3. Alternative funding of library services: Fundraising and Sponsoring (service in return)

- Who: General public, foundations, private companies (e.g. regional and local saving banks, publishing houses, bookshops and other local companies)
- What: Materials, projects, events



### 3. Alternative funding of library services:

#### Fundraising possibilities

- Special campaigns for the set up of a children library
- Gift vouchers for annual library fee
- dinner invitation by mayor with celebrity
- gala dinner with auction of donated products

## 3. Alternative funding of library services: Fundraising example

friends of the library  
group in Mülheim/Ruhr  
Public library: 2<sup>nd</sup> hand  
bookshop run by  
volunteers (friends of  
library) in cooperation  
with centre for volunteer  
work: “Schmökerstube”,  
all income donated to  
projects of the library



## 3. Alternative funding of library services: Sponsoring examples

- Düren City Library: Sponsoring Network: concept of small steps
  - a) reading promotion, e.g.
    - reading card in each school bag through sponsoring by project “local crafts industry supports reading”
    - Book cases for schools
    - Youth reading week and book night
  - b) new media/special media, e.g.
    - Video films in natural science
  - c) other: e.g.
    - Your Birthday for the library: get money instead of presents, give to library

## 3. Alternative funding of library services: Sponsoring examples

- Würzburg Public Library:
  - Sponsoring of periodicals by content related private companies (travel journal by travel agency)
  - Sponsoring of author reading by local car dealer: instead of fee: free annual car inspection
- American Memorial library Berlin:
  - sponsoring of furniture for children library from local retailer

### 3. Alternative funding of library services:

## Donation example: Book patrons

- Duisburg Public library: “Book patron project” in bookshops in cooperation with civic foundation, book buyers buy new books for the library
- The Scientific Library of the City of Mainz: campaign “Book Patient” looking for sponsors” for the restoration of historic books

## 3. Alternative funding of library services:

### On-line donation examples

- On-line donation via website (PayPal) (e.g. university library Konstanz)
- City library Essen:
  - [www.billiger.de](http://www.billiger.de) special campaign “books for all” for 6 weeks: buy one book via the partner [www.bücher.de](http://www.bücher.de) and Website owner [www.billiger.de](http://www.billiger.de) will donate the same amount of money to the city library Essen
- Crowdfunding (online platform that allows you to collect donations from a broad pool of individual donors in order to fund a project within a finite span of time)

### 3. Alternative funding of library services: friends of the library group

- Many established since 1990s, now: ca. 400 friends groups
- Aim: to improve position and secure the future of library
- Work for better public attention and use of library
- Lobbying for library
- Membership fee as income source
- Additional acquisition of donations for new media, new services, events, new technologies

### 3. Alternative funding of library services: friends of the library group

- Hamm public library:
  - Workers in minor employment in library are paid via friends group
  - Literary groups are established by friends group
- Heilbronn public library:
  - “Story to give away”: Placement of Reading aloud volunteers in schools and kindergarten



## 3. Alternative funding of library services: volunteers

- Support of library services that are otherwise not possible
- Very often reading programmes for adults and children
- Wismar public library:
  - Internet adviser for senior citizen
- Hamburg public library:
  - “Media messenger”: Book service for homebound people
  - “Book dwarfs”: volunteers encourage young children in residential homes (immigrants, refugees) to learn language of country

### 3. Alternative funding of library services: IT donation program by private companies

- “stifter-helfen.de – IT for Nonprofits” is the IT donation project of “Stiftungszentrum.de” in partnership with TechSoup Global.
- “Stiftungszentrum.de” is a charitable foundation center that offers support and services to foundations and donors.
- The project was launched in October 2008 and distributes PCs and software donations to non-profits like public libraries in Germany

### 3. Alternative funding of library services: IT donation program by private companies

- In cooperation with German Library Association, public libraries can buy all hardware and software for an administration fee of 4% of the original price only (savings: 96%)
- Idea by American non-profit organisation  
<http://www.techsoupglobal.org/>
- active in more than 30 countries

## 4. Improve services to customers and use resources effectively

- Project: **strategic library planning**
- 220 (smaller) public libraries since 2001 ff
- Organised by private company with Library Agencies
- Library director develops individual strategic library concept within 18 months
- Three workshops for first input, exchange of experiences, discussion of intermediary results

## 4. Improve services to customers and use resources effectively

- With less financial resources it is necessary to set priorities in library services (no longer “library for all”)
- It is more convincing to present a well-developed long-term plan to municipality than one-off projects
- The plan will assist the profiling of the library
- The plan will assist customer-oriented use of scarce resources

## 4. Improve services to customers and use resources effectively

- The plan reflects for each library:
  - Societal developments (more immigrants, more elderly people, more unemployment...) and its effects on the library services
  - Need for lifelong learning and its effects on the library
  - Need for further education and the role of library
  - New technologies and the consequences for the library

## 4. Improve services to customers and use resources effectively

1. Research hard facts and figures about specific population structure (customer orientation)
2. Identify the state of problems in your own region: position the library as problem solver
3. Include mission of library / task profile (legislation, former decisions of political groups)
4. Set priority groups (age, circumstances, topics)

## 4. Improve services to customers and use resources effectively

5. Define measurable goals
6. Develop cooperation and partnerships (local, regional, different forms)
7. Decide on catalogue of measures to be taken (opening hours, media stock, research profile...)
8. Decide on communication forms
9. Decide on modern technology and equipment



## 4. Improve services to customers and use resources effectively

10. Decide on resource policy
11. Decide on organisational and leadership policy
12. Evaluate (decide which topics and which methods of measurements)

## 5. Share resources: Cooperation with **libraries**, schools, kindergarten

- Project: Libraries exchange their media in a certain rhythm with each other to increase the individual library's media offer and to exchange experience
  - Example: 30 libraries in Rheinhessen
    - 4.800 DVDs, 4-6 libraries cooperate, will be exchanged every 4 months
- Project: Libraries agree on common stock building and events
  - Example: libraries in area Warendorf

## 5. Share resources: Cooperation with **libraries**, schools, kindergarten

- German Internet Library:  
<http://www.internetbibliothek.de>
  - Shared compilation of 7.000 links in 20 fields of knowledge, regularly updated
  - Shared question service by librarians of 60 public libraries, answers within two days

## 5. Share resources: Cooperation with libraries, **schools**, kindergarten

- Only about 15% of German schools have professionally run school libraries
- Since 2000, cooperation treaties in almost all federal states with German library association: Public library and schools find new forms of cooperation
  - Reading promotion, regular class visits, school lessons in library
  - Public library staff cooperate with volunteers in schools (parents, teachers)

## 5. Share resources: Cooperation with libraries, schools, **kindergarten**

Example Kreuzgarten Public  
Library:

- Visit of children to library (including story reading)
- Parents are presented some books in Kindergarten
- Children made a book themselves in library: painting and writing
- Book is now in stock of library



## 5. Share resources:

### E-lending through one commercial supplier

- Founded in 2006, started in 2007 with 4 pilot libraries
- Private company: Divibib GmbH
- Offers complete service with all components:
  - Implementation of online platform as digital library branch
  - Internet based service without installation needed
  - Technical support for running services
  - Negotiation of licences and distribution of digital contents
  - Subject indexing and delivery of catalogue entries in MAB2

## 5. Share resources:

### E-lending through one commercial supplier

#### Registered library users

- Visit homepage of local library
- Browse digital content (format, topic, full text)
- Put interesting materials into library basket
- Log-in with personal data before lending
- Download of materials to PC/e-book reader
- Library determines length of lending/no. of items

## 5. Share resources:

### E-lending through one commercial supplier

- Extension of service offer to 24/7
- New user groups (employed people 30-40 years)
- Better offer in rural areas next to mobile libraries
- Reduction of space/maintenance costs
- Less administration
- One supplier that negotiates on behalf of libraries
- Single platform for delivery to the user
- Package possible, individual titles possible



## 5. Share resources:

### E-lending through one commercial supplier

- Offered by **300** public libraries in Germany
- **50.000** media units negotiated
- **17.600** media units on offer
- At least **100** new media added per week
- mainly e-books added
- individual or consortia purchasing

## 5. Share resources:

# E-lending through one commercial supplier

- Example: Berlin Public library system
  - 20.000 Berliners or 5% of all registered library patrons use e-offers
  - Access to ca. 10.000 titles
  - Fiction: 500 titles
  - In high demand: advice books in law and economics
  - Increasing loan figures



## 6. Join forces:

# Support by German library association

- Report on the State of Libraries 2010 ff.
- Image Campaign: “Meeting Point Library” 2008 ff.

**TREFFPUNKT  
BIBLIOTHEK**  
Information  
hat viele Gesichter

facts and statistics

Report  
on Libraries in Germany  
2010



## 6. Join forces:

### Support by German library association

- Position paper on funding needs of public libraries and lobby activities
- Study on reasons for non-usage of libraries and developments of suitable measures to attract non-users

## 6. Join forces:

# Support by German library association

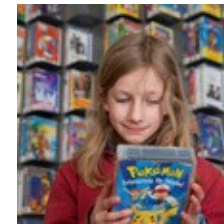
- Common PR materials: postcards and posters



## 6. Join forces:

# Support by German library association

- Common PR materials: photographs for free use by library association members



## 6. Join forces:

### Support by German library association

- ABC Webclip on libraries in library association channel with more videos by libraries
- [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ctWHCWeQIC4&feature=player\\_detailpage](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ctWHCWeQIC4&feature=player_detailpage)

## The way ahead

In order to really improve our situation, we need next to additional funding:

- To thoroughly review our tasks
- To build a distinct library profile
- To cooperate across municipalities
- To mobilise voluntary civil involvement and
- To continue to run unconventional image campaigns.

All this should be done by libraries themselves.



# Thank you!

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