

# The library of the Deutsches Forum für Kunstgeschichte

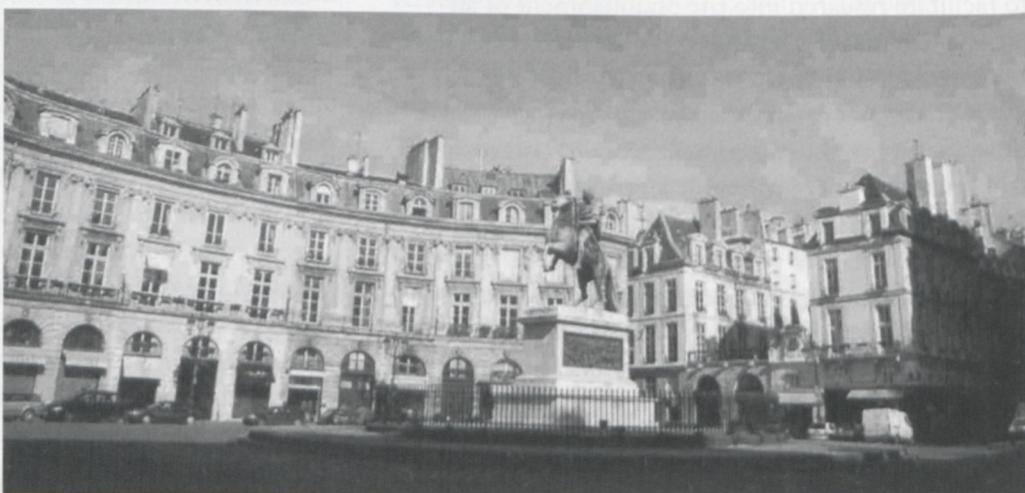
*Jörg Ebeling*

The Centre allemande d'histoire de l'art/Deutsches Forum für Kunstgeschichte in Paris (DFK), founded in 1997, is a research institute dedicated to German research on French art and culture. Located in the historic centre of Paris on the place des Victoires, near to the Louvre and the recently founded French Institut national d'histoire de l'art (INHA), its further task is to promote interest among French scholars in research on German art and cultural history. To support its major fields of activity, the DFK is creating a library devoted to German art and cultural history, which now comprises some 60,000 items.

To have the privilege of writing an article on the library of the Centre allemand d'histoire de l'art/Deutsches Forum für Kunstgeschichte in Paris (DFK) for the *Art libraries journal* is truly remarkable in view of the youth of this institution. The Forum was founded as a 'project' in 1997 with funding provided by the German Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research. Two years later, work began on the development of a library of German art and cultural history which now comprises some 60,000 items. The unusually rapid admission to membership of the federal foundation of Deutsche Geisteswissenschaftliche Institute im Ausland (DGIA), the German institutes for research in the humanities abroad, in November 2004, represents a significant milestone in the history of the DFK. And thus I would like to take this opportunity to review past accomplishments and look ahead to the future of the library of the DFK.

## Political mandate and collection priorities

When we think of German institutions and libraries devoted to art history abroad, the first prestigious examples that come to mind are the Bibliotheca Hertziana in Rome<sup>1</sup> and the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florence.<sup>2</sup> These two institutions have been firmly established as centres of traditionally prodigious German research on Italian art and culture since about 1900. Until recently, there has been no comparable institutional framework for German art historiography in France, a situation that is primarily attributable to the recurring



View of the Place des Victoires with its equestrian statue of Louis XIV.

hostilities between these two nations dating back to the 19th century. Yet German interest in the art and culture of France is grounded in a similarly long tradition which remains as vital as ever today.

Unlike the institutions in Rome and Florence, whose libraries and photographic collections are oriented toward the history of Italian art, the DFK was founded in Paris near the end of the 20th century in a landscape of scholarship that has flourished over centuries. More than any other major city, the French capital offers knowledgeable students of French culture a broad and diverse array of unusually rich archives and pictorial documentation as well as art and museum libraries. Thus in view of the existing opportunities for research, the establishment of a library focused exclusively on France was by no means a necessity – even for a research institute dedicated to German research on French art and culture.

Apart from research on France, one of the primary objectives of the DFK is to promote interest among French scholars in research on German art and cultural history. The German libraries and research institutes already established in Paris – the Deutsches Historisches Institut (DHI), the Heinrich-Heine Haus and the Goetheinstitut – pursue different objectives. While the Goetheinstitut is concerned primarily with conveying an image of contemporary Germany, for example, and thus offers only a few titles in the field of art scholarship, the DHI maintains an impressive collection of works on German history and scholarly literature on France written in German, yet has only a small collection of materials on German art. Thus French historians and scholars have repeatedly called attention to the need for a library devoted to German art and cultural history. The idea was that the DFK would fill crucial gaps in the collections of Parisian art libraries and, in doing so, occupy a particularly important niche in the intellectual life of the host country.

Visitors to the DFK at the Place des Victoires in the heart of Paris today encounter a vital and active research institute that serves as a setting for numerous colloquia, lectures and seminars devoted to the subjects cited above. In the institute library, scholars have access to the most important literature on German art and cultural history and to works on French art written in German. The latter field is of particular importance, as it supports the DFK's intended role as a mediator. The primary function of the library is to provide literature to scholars affiliated with the DFK. More than thirty fellows and researchers from Germany, France and other countries use the collections on a daily basis for their

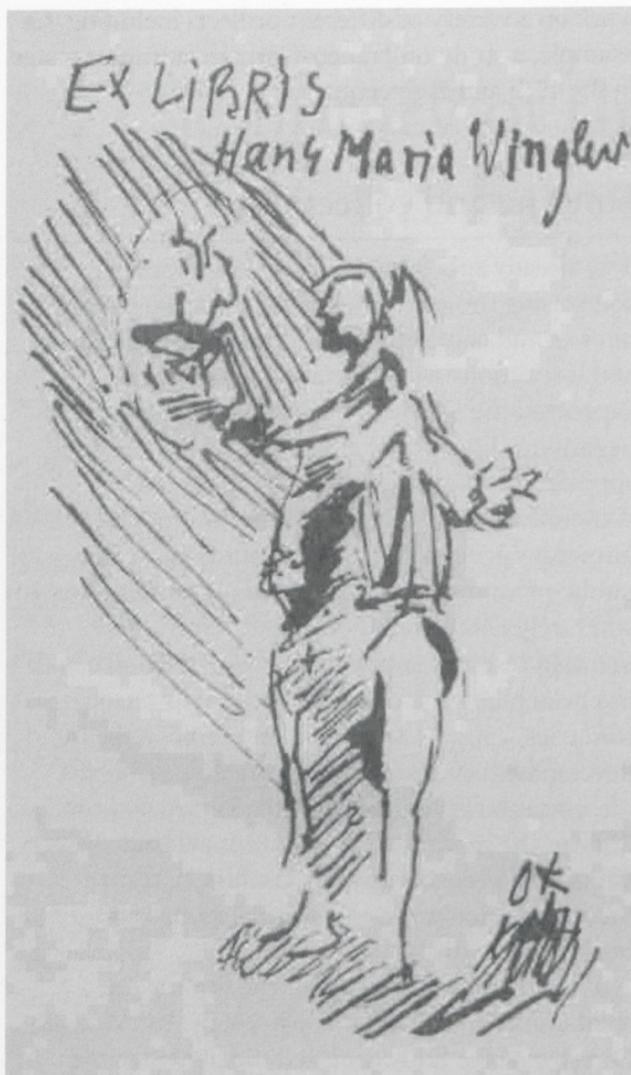
work on a variety of different projects including, for example, a study on Franco-German culture transfer in the 19th and 20th centuries.

## Funding and collections

The already substantial library collections, comprising some 60,000 items, reflect the strong interest and commitment of numerous individuals and institutions who have accompanied and supported the DFK and its library from the very beginning. The idea of a 'German' forum in Paris – appealed to many colleagues in the research community but also attracted the attention of numerous private donors and foundations. The public-private partnership model – a concept that is still rarely encountered on a large scale in the German research landscape but is well-known and has been highly successful in the Anglo-Saxon countries – played an instrumental role in the rapid development and expansion of the library. The identification of patrons with the Forum and the library – as an ideal and organizational unit – is very strong and is encouraged by the library team through the inclusion of donation stamps and bookplates in the books.

The first building block for the library was attributable entirely to this patronage. In 1999, the Director of the DFK acquired the library of the Berlin Bauhaus expert Hans-Maria Wingler with the aid of funds provided by outside donors. Comprising some 7,000 volumes, this significant special library devoted to the architecture of the 19th and 20th centuries is now the proud nucleus of the collection. It provided the stimulus for research on the relationship between the Bauhaus and France in research year 2000/2001, a year entitled *Le Bauhaus et la France*. These first steps were taken without the help of trained librarians, and the books were initially shelved in the newly occupied rooms at the Place des Victoires in accordance with an in-house scheme.

Another event which occurred during the following year forced the library to initiate a major reorientation programme. The sudden death in June 2000 of Berlin art historian Hermann Wiesler, who had bequeathed his personal libraries containing an estimated 35,000 volumes to the Forum in his will, made it absolutely necessary to establish the library on a professional footing. One of the most impressive aspects of the Bibliothek Wiesler, which largely comprises works on German art of the 19th and 20th centuries, is that it contains both precious rare items and original editions (primarily from the



Ex-Libris designed by Oskar Kokoschka for Hans-Maria Wingler, in: *Oskar Kokoschka, Dramen und Bilder*. Leipzig: Wolff, 1913.

18th and early 19th centuries) as well as very recent exhibition catalogues and scholarly works. This core is supplemented by an unparalleled collection of writings (most of them in original editions) on art theory and aesthetics (Winckelmann, Vischer, Justi, Burckhardt, Lichtwark, Meier-Graefe, etc.). Another section of the Bibliothek Wiesler includes works by all the important German philosophers and authors, largely in the form of original and special editions (Hegel, Cassirer, Jünger, Goethe, Schiller, Heine, Nietzsche, Brecht, etc.). The organisation of the Bibliothek Wiesler in Paris in keeping with the principles of art librarianship was funded for a period of two years by the Robert-Bosch-Stiftung GmbH, and is scheduled for completion in 2005.

Pulsating growth, each spurt accompanied by spatial expansion and staff enlargement, continued during the years that followed, as other complete private libraries were acquired, among them the

reference libraries of French art historian Jacques Lugand (2000), Karl and Elfriede Ruhrberg (2003) and Christian Beutler (2003). In addition, the collections have been continually supplemented with gifts from numerous individual donors, whom I wish to thank for their commitment at this time, and through noteworthy donations by Hans and Mascha Lüthy, Thomas W. and Barbara Gaehtgens, and Werner and Monique Spies. Last year, the newly founded Freundeskreis des DFK (Friends of the DFK) also included the library in its funding programme.

Lively correspondence too has ensured continuous growth of the collection of important scholarly literature. The results of scholarly research at the DFK are published annually in the *Passagen/Passages* series. This series also includes studies on French and German art history authored by members of the Forum staff which do not relate to the specific annual focal themes. *Passerelles*, a second series of publications launched in 2001, is devoted to individual aspects of Franco-German art transfer and French art. Studies on specific topics are published in the series entitled *Monographien/Monographies*. The works in these series, which are cited on the Forum's home page, are now exchanged with nearly 100 partners throughout the world.<sup>3</sup>

## Development and partnerships

Thanks to the national and international network of art libraries, the development of a new library is a gratifying undertaking today, even though it has of course not been possible to solve all local problems in dialogue with our colleagues. The library benefited early on from membership of the Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Kunst- und Museumsbibliotheken (AKMB)<sup>4</sup> and from the generously granted privilege of participation as an associate member in the meetings of the Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Kunstbibliotheken (AKB),<sup>5</sup> a federation of leading German art libraries. The collegiality and professionalism of our partner libraries in Germany and especially in France (the library is also represented by its director as a member of the Association des Bibliothécaires français) have been exemplary and have benefited the DFK significantly. Early assistance provided by Rüdiger Hoyer, Director of the library of the Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschichte (ZI) in Munich,<sup>6</sup> and by other colleagues, as well as the participation of library employees in advanced training seminars conducted by the AKMB, led to timely fundamental decisions with regard to collection cataloguing. It

was soon decided that a card catalogue would not be set up. The Windows-based library software Allegro, supplemented by the Capriccio version developed specifically for art libraries, was used for the OPAC.

A program called zack was introduced as the most recent development at the AKMB training seminar, *Allegro in art libraries*, in the year 2000. zack is a search engine for library databases which can be addressed via the Z39.50 protocol. Developed as a complement to Allegro, this data-sharing program enables users to search for documents in one or more bibliographic databases and to import matches, along with subject headings, immediately into the local database. zack has been used for the initial cataloguing of the libraries transferred to Paris in February 2001. Thus all the books on the shelves of the DFK are listed and can be searched for in the OPAC. This procedure by no means eliminates the need for bibliographic processing of title citations, which can be quite extensive depending upon the quality of the imported data. Titles imported with zack are processed in accordance with the *Regeln für die alphabetische Katalogisierung für wissenschaftliche Bibliotheken* (RAK-WB), the rules for alphabetical cataloguing in academic libraries.

Due to the shortage of personnel, the decision was made to dispense with local content and subject indexing for the time being. However, every effort is made to ensure that as many subject headings as possible from other libraries are used when data records are imported. This is done initially in German. In view of the fact that about 50% of the employees speak French and that the library's offerings are oriented towards a French-speaking public, the restriction to subject indexing in German alone would appear to make little sense. Solving this problem – a goal currently pursued by numerous library associations – is one of the most urgent tasks to be faced in the future.

The library of the DFK was provided with generous personnel by the Executive Board from the very beginning, and most of these jobs are secured through outside funding. On average, the library relies on the services of two full-time librarians with university degrees and two art historians who work half-days as academic assistants. Two additional interns have been assigned to assist in the process of reviewing and arranging the private libraries. Working together, these colleagues are responsible for ensuring the proper functioning of the library.

With a series of lectures in which German art libraries, archives and other institutions are presented at the Forum, the library team seeks to

support the exchange of knowledge in the field of library science as well. As the organiser of such activities as presentations on document delivery services currently in widespread use in Germany (Subito, Munich (ZI) and Heidelberg) or the Zentralarchiv des internationalen Kunsthandels e.V. (Zadik), the central archives of the international art trade, or plans for a study tour of German art and museum librarians in conjunction with the 10th anniversary of the AKMB – the library of the DFK seeks to serve as a setting for professional dialogue at both the bilateral and international levels.

## Library space and use

During the first few years of its existence, the Forum was a guest in provisional rooms made available by the INHA at the Galerie Vivienne. Soon, however, two floors were rented in one of the 17th-century buildings grouped in a semi-circle around the equestrian statue of Louis XIV on the Place des Victoires. Situated near the Site Richelieu of the Bibliothèque nationale de France and within walking distance of the INHA and its future 'Bibliothèque des arts',<sup>7</sup> the Place des Victoires is also very close to the major art libraries (and a perfect starting point from which to explore Paris). Another floor in the adjacent building at No. 8, Place des Victoires was added in 2003, followed by rental of a floor planned as a book storage area in the Rue du Mail in autumn 2004, less than five minutes' walking distance from the other buildings.

However, the unavoidable fragmentation of the Forum resulting from occupation of new spaces distributed over three buildings and four floors creates certain problems, both with respect to internal co-operation on research projects and to the use and availability of the library. Within the organisation, priority has always been given to the concept of the Forum as a place of encounter and dialogue. The assignment of employees to two different locations has inevitably led to disruption in internal communication; this is counteracted by daily staff gatherings for afternoon coffee and tea 'à la Getty' in one of the two buildings. At the same time, the distribution of library collections over three different locations fosters desirable interaction among colleagues, as frequent visits to one of the floors to search for literature is an integral part of a researcher's daily work.

The division of the collections into three parts, each located in a different building, has proved to be a much more difficult and personnel-intensive undertaking. The floors on the Place des Victoires

were built in the late 17th century and are equipped with no lifts of any kind, due to monument preservation restrictions. The collections are distributed throughout the building – even in the Director's office. Outside library users are now required to arrange appointments by telephone and to describe their literature needs to the library team. The primary purpose of these procedures is to assign readers to one of the two publicly accessible floors, although it often happens that a reader is forced to move from one building to another in the course of a day. This requires duty librarians to walk long distances and often involves carrying requested books from place to place.

The OPAC was made available to the DFK staff and outside visitors soon after its installation. It is important to emphasize in this context that the library of the Forum is not a public library. However, access to the collections is guaranteed to any scholar who is interested in the subject matter they cover or who has identified a book in the library that is available nowhere else in Paris. No restrictions on access by young students (which are standard practice in the major research libraries) have been imposed. The DFK has exercised considerable discretion in its external relations. Its status as a newcomer familiar only to a small circle of scholars enables the library to maintain a generous open policy, which would be impossible in a different context given the personnel and accommodation available at present. The library opens its doors to outside readers for several hours on four weekdays. Since the reading room is also the only multi-purpose seminar and lecture hall at the Forum, visitors are asked to confirm availability during these hours by telephoning in advance.

## Future projects

Internal discussions among members of the library team, the Executive Board and other employees of the DFK revolve above all around matters relating to classification, the assignment of call numbers and the planned installation of a Web OPAC. The collections of the library were initially shelved in accordance with an in-house system, and this principle worked quite well until the library reached a certain size. A decision to make a change was taken on the basis of the system in use at the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Bonn. New categories must now be added, however, due to the diversity of the collections of the Bibliothek Wiesler. Furthermore, the system also needs to reflect developments in new media. Work has now commenced on the assignment of call numbers for individual groups of books. Given the present size of the library, this project can be expected to take several years to complete, as the tasks of assigning call-numbers and final cataloguing in keeping with appropriate rules must be performed during normal operating hours.

The installation of a local Web OPAC is planned for early 2006. Due to the restricted spatial and personnel structure of the Forum, the OPAC will be accessible to begin with only on the Forum's intranet and via password to members of the Forum working from outside the library. Although certainly worth striving for, DFK's goal of integrating the OPAC



Reading room of the Deutsches Forum für Kunstgeschichte in Paris.

into existing networks such as the Virtueller Katalog Kunstgeschichte<sup>8</sup> will have to be the focus of future discussion, as Web presentation attracts a larger audience and will result in a significant increase in readership.

## Outlook

Since it was founded, the Deutsches Forum für Kunstgeschichte has gained a firm position in the French knowledge landscape and earned international recognition. The DFK was admitted to membership of the International Association of Research Institutes in the History of Art (RIHA) in June 2003. The growth of the library has played a role of incalculable importance in this process and is the achievement of many former and current colleagues, to whom I wish to express my heartfelt thanks for their commitment and enthusiasm. The future of the library of the DFK – at least in its present configuration – remains quite open. I hope that the discussions regarding budget and personnel issues within the Federal Government and the Stiftung DGIA – under the influence of urgent fiscal considerations – will culminate in positive decisions regarding the future work of this library of German art and cultural history in Paris.

## References

1. See article by Sybille Ebert-Schifferer elsewhere in this issue of *Art libraries journal*.
2. See article by Jan Simane elsewhere in this issue of *Art libraries journal*.
3. For details on the exchange of publications and a list of publications see [www.dt-forum.org](http://www.dt-forum.org).
4. See article by Laura Held in *ARLIS news-sheet*, 74 March/April 2005, p.10.
5. See article by Thomas Lersch in *Art libraries journal*, 21, no. 4 (1996): 5-12.
6. See article by Rüdiger Hoyer elsewhere in this issue of *Art libraries journal*.
7. [www.inha.fr](http://www.inha.fr). See Jörg Ebeling. 'Das "Jalta" des Kulturministers – die Bibliothèque des arts in Paris'. *AKMB-news* 8, Heft 3 (2002): 42-46 and Martine Poulain. 'A major art library in preparation: the library of the Institut national d'histoire de l'art'. *Art libraries journal* 30, no. 2 (2005): 4-16.
8. Hoyer, Rüdiger. 'The Virtueller Katalog Kunstgeschichte as a tool for international co-Operation.' *Art libraries journal* 28, no. 1 (2003): 15-18.

Jörg Ebeling

Scientific Advisor (Library)

Centre allemand d'histoire de l'art/Deutsches Forum für Kunstgeschichte in Paris (DFK)

10 Place des Victoires

75002 Paris

France

E-mail: [jebeling@dt-forum.org](mailto:jebeling@dt-forum.org)