

The system of vocational training for archivists, librarians and documentalists¹ in Germany – new strategies for a permanent exchange

By Harry Scholz

Overview

1. Structure of vocational training for archivists, librarians and documentalists (ALD)² in Germany
 2. Integrative vocational training strategies for ALD and their perspectives
 3. Conclusions and perspectives
-

1. Structure of vocational training for archivists, librarians and documentalists (ALD) in Germany

Professions and training courses in the information sector in Germany at the beginning of the 21st century are marked by a great variety. In the past, the role of archives, libraries and institutions for information and documentation were more or less strictly separated. Since 1990 the integration of ALD by new integrative vocational training courses outside the administrative training were realized.

At the same time, there still exists the traditional vocational training in the field of ALD-professions separately. So today's diversity of vocational training careers can be subdivided in:

- 1.) the traditional administrative vocational training in the public service of the state and municipal administration (= special form of academic colleges for archival sciences in Marburg and Munich).
- 2.) ALD vocational training in the dual system of employees in media and information services in administration, private enterprises and industry (vocational college for media and information services in cooperation with archives, libraries and institutions for information and documentation).
- 3.) the academic vocational training for ALD in the framework of universities for applied sciences

¹ The word „Documentalist“ will usually not be used in english language. In the context of this paper „documentalist“ may have two meanings: 1. employees in media and information services like information officers (in Germany FAMIs) and 2. information specialists with an academic degree (in Germany „Diplomdokumentar/in“ and „wiss. Dokumentar“). In this context „documentalist“ includes both aspects.

² In this text the Abbreviation ALD stands for Archives, Library an Documentation. In Germany and France the abbreviation ABD is used. It means the same: archives, bibliothèques (libraries) et documentation. In general there are two meanings of ALD in Germany: 1.) It describes institutions as archives, libraries and documentation centers and 2.) it stands for an integrative method and cooperation for vocational training between archives, libraries and documentation centers.

This paper will deal with special modes of vocational training under the aspect of new strategies for a permanent exchange in questions of possible cooperation between the different ALD professions. It will focus on two representative career groups of integrated vocational training:

- 1.) The vocational training of employees in media and information services, in Germany called "Fachangestellte für Medien und Informationsdienste (FAMI)"
- 2.) The vocational training in the framework of the university for applied sciences, fields of study: Information Sciences (formerly: Archives, Library and Documentation)

For both types of vocational training the practical training periods in different ALD-institutions are essential and subsequently included in their curricula. Both types attempt to integrate the different ALD-information sectors and can be combined so that students have an option to advance in their professional career.

2. Integrative vocational training strategies for ALD and their perspectives

As mentioned above we can distinguish between two career groups in the integrated field of ALD-vocational training.

- a) Employees in media and information services (FAMI) – assistant level

This type of vocational training exists since 1998. Trainees in all fields of ALD-activities usually study three years on the level of so called assistant professionals (lower or assistant level). About 18 month of this time trainees take an integrated vocational training in all ALD learning fields. At the end of this period they take an (intermediate) examination at the vocational college in cooperation with their trainers/educators in five different fields of ALD-professions:

- a) Archives
- b) Libraries
- c) Information and documentation centres
- d) Photo agencies (dealing with special concerns as for instance the commercial utilization of photographs, problems of copyright etc.)
- e) Medical documentation (dealing for example with questions of how to manage medical files at hospitals etc.)

In the second phase vocational training of FAMIs is focused on a specific field of one of these five ALD-professions. The first advantage of this combined mode is that in principle every absolvent of this type of vocational training can work in each of these five fields of work and secondly that the knowledge of the basic fields of work of all of these five ALD-sectors is ideal for application in ALD-cooperation projects.

Below topics touched on during the first 18 month phase of FAMI-vocational training are named:

1. ALD-institutions and organizations (national and international ALD-associations, different types of archives, libraries, documentation centers etc.)

2. Type of employers (private or public), employment law, industrial law and social security law
3. Safety conditions and questions of environmental protection
4. Acquisition, forms of description and formal description, reference services in the practice of ALD
5. Modes of communication and cooperation
6. Organization of working processes and the employment practice in offices
7. Modern types of information- and communication systems
8. Questions of public relations (PR), PR-fields of work in ALD-institutions (exhibitions, web-presentations, creation of internet homepages/HTML-documents)

As mentioned before this first 18 month period of vocational training for FAMI-trainees ends with an intermediate exam. Afterwards in the second phase of training trainees start with their specific program in one of the five ALD-areas.

In Germany the vocational training on the level of employees in media and information services (FAMI) is characterized as a (so called) **dual system**. That means that trainees are actually employed for the whole period of their vocational training in an archive, a library or in a documentation center and attend their vocational college during that time usually on one or two days per week. In combination and cooperation of both partners the vocational training of the FAMIs is realized.

Today nearly ten years after the beginning of this field of vocational training you can find 1.659 qualified FAMIs employed in Germany. Most of them are employed in libraries (approx. 80 %), or in archives and documentation centers (approx. 8 % each).

b) University of Applied Sciences (Potsdam), field of study: Information studies

When the University of Applied Sciences (Potsdam)³ was founded in 1991 the field of study "Information studies" did not exist yet. In those days information studies were called ABD. That stood for "Archiv, Bibliothek (library) and Documentation". Aim of that (at that time) innovative type of academic education was to integrate the potentially similar tasks of archives, libraries and documentation centers. At the end of their ABD studies (nowadays: information studies) students obtained or obtain qualification as archivist, librarian or documentalist with an academic degree (diploma). The structure of studies is and was nearly identical with the structure of the vocational training of the employee in media and information services (FAMI). Both differ in their level of abstraction and academic requirements.

³ Compare: <http://www.fh-potsdam.de/> and details: <http://informationswissenschaften.fh-potsdam.de/>

The experiences derived from ABD study courses at Potsdam (today: information sciences) functioned as model for the vocational training of FAMIs. Due to their students' qualification and the positive feedback they received from ABD-institutions, more and more archivists from Potsdam were employed. Today you find this type of information specialist in all types of ALD-institutions (private and public).

Below you will find a short overview about the integrated learning fields of information studies at the University of Applied Sciences (Potsdam) which are obligatory for students and are described as "integrative compulsory module":⁴

P 1 Key Qualifications

- a) Communication and presentation
- b) academic working (forms of citation etc.)
- c) practical training in the field of digital media
- d) basic knowledge in frequently used office soft- and hardware components

P 2 Common Basics

- a) Introduction in terms like Information society, new tasks for ALD-professions
- b) Introduction in history of media, their function and technique

P3 Basics in Information and Communication technologies

- a) Data- and Telecommunication
- b) Internet- and WWW technologies
- c) HTML & CSS (Cascade Style Sheets)
- d) Internet retrieval and Information systems

P 4 Basics in ALD description in practise

- a) (formal) description in libraries
- b) organisation of information
- c) description in archives
- d) description and presentation of textual records and archives

P 5 Infrastructure of ABD (ALD)

Introduction in national and international associations, organisations of the ALD-sector and their typological features

- a) Characteristic of libraries in Germany
- b) Archival Typology
- c) Infrastructure of IuD-Institutions and Organisations

P 6 English for Information Specialists

- a) Basic Knowledge of English
- b) Acquisition of a basic working knowledge of terminology in the field of Information Sciences, Information Services – targeted at workflow and service communication

P 7 Economic thinking and basics for information enterprises

⁴ Details: http://informationswissenschaften.fh-potsdam.de/studienstruktur_fb0.html

P 8 Digital Publications

- a) Process and making of digital publications
- b) File formats and digital printing process
- c) Infrastructure of electronic publishing
- d) Content management systems

P 9 XML

- a) definitions of document types
- b) DTD and XML schemes
- c) XML, XML Spy
- d) Using fields for ABD institutions
- e) XML-style sheets
- f) XML and databases (X Query)

P 10 Questions of national and international law concerning ALD

- a) special law fields for ALD (copyright etc.)
- b) DRM (digital law management)
- c) Trusted Computing (TC) for ABD professionals and institutions

Students have to take all this “integrative compulsory modules” during their basic studies within three semesters. The “process of Bologna”, i.e. the introduction of European degrees as Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) and Master of Arts (M.A.) has also reached the University of Applied Sciences in Potsdam. At present students may obtain B.A. degrees. The introduction of Master degree study courses will be realized soon. At present following academic degrees are obtainable:

- B.A. for Archival Studies
- B.A. for Library Management
- B.A. for Information Studies

In addition to these, students may also take graduate and postgraduate distance learning courses (distance training) in the same modular structure as in the direct studies to obtain academic degrees for ALD-professions.

3. Conclusions and perspectives

Traditional professions of the ALD-area, archivists and librarians, are presently facing a permanent growing number of new challenges.

Archivists have to react to new developments in digitization, to the problems of data protection and data migration, to new databases for information transfer and last but not least to Document Management Systems (DMS).

Librarians today are involved in designing and establishing virtual libraries in the world wide web. They create instruments and methods to provide users with more own information competence for instance by making more multimedia training software available. For Librarians more organizational and economical knowledge is necessary, too. What is clearly needed in our information society are ideas for developing innovative service products.

Documentalists have to fulfill tasks in building and organizing information structures for our information society. Presentation, web design and online retrieval of special individual information are also daily challenges for documentalists. In future work on global information networks and virtual information services or on specific intranet solutions for enterprises will become more and more important. Thus the documentalists' profession largely depends on knowledge of the newest information and documentation technologies.

Already today the aspect of "lifelong-learning" has become more and more important. In future it will be even more so. Vocational training in the information professions must offer instruments and methods for this demand.