

The FES Library's support of a political library in Dodoma (Tanzania): a different approach to preserving the memory of a country

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The Library of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation (FES Library) is one of the few special libraries in Germany that play an active part in the system of special subject collections which intends to provide access to every book that has been published world-wide to researchers and scientists all over Germany. Within this system the FES Library provides access to its huge collection of primary publications of trade unions and political parties from Germany and many European countries. Besides this, the FES Library has managed to take an active part in the provision of relevant digital contents through its digitizing activities, partly even realized as IALHI projects.¹ The main pillars of this collection are both the close connections of the FES Library with many labour movement organisations and the technical and vocational skills of its staff members, especially in the field of the library and information sciences.

Although the library community in Germany values the work of the FES Library and acknowledges its different activities in providing professional librarian competence for the humanities and social sciences, this aspect of the Library's work did not play a decisive role within the remaining parts of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation (FES). The main focuses of the FES work become manifest in the keywords of its activities: *Development Cooperation, International Dialogue, Research and Consulting, Political Education* and *Scholarship*.² Within these activities of the FES the Library is part of the *Research and Consulting* area with the main attribute to preserve the memory of the labour movement. This characteristic of the FES Library certainly stresses especially the aspect *Research* of the FES work, which also was visible through the organisational integration of this department within the Historical Research Centre of the FES which was dissolved in 2009 due to personal changes though. But the aspect of *Consulting* played not a really important part within the Library's work in the past.

This chanced almost two years ago when a special project of the FES office in Tanzania was revived. The FES offices in developing countries have constantly tried to support the development of the political culture through helping in building democratic structures or engaging in educating young politicians. Equally important is the support of political institutions, and in Tanzania this led to close connections with the ruling political party Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM). This party has been the most important political force in Tanzania since independence in 1962 (at that time under the name TANU – Tanganyika African National Union), especially for the long period before a multi-party system was established in 1992. Due to this fact it is a simple and logical consequence that the relatively young history of this country is essentially documented through papers, publications and documents of TANU and CCM.

The CCM established a library in 1978 in its headquarters in Dodoma, Tanzania's capital. This institution, although always addressed as “library”, was and is a place which not only should serve as scientific library for CCM members, but always had the function of a repository for CCM publications and in the future might also include the great diversity of party documents that illustrate the organisation and structure of this party and at the same time document the development of the whole

1 One example for these activities ist the IALHI Project: Programmatic Documents of the Socialist International and the European Trade Union Confederation and affiliates (URL: http://library.fes.de/library/ialhi/ial_fram.html).

2 See also the English language leaflet about the FES work (URL: http://www.fes.de/inhalt/Dokumente_2009/FES%20SD%202009%20GB.pdf).

country.³ As a result of the close connections between CCM and the FES office (and certainly between CCM and SPD) a memorandum was drafted in the year 1980 which stresses the intended cooperation between CCM and FES with respect to the CCM library project. The main pillars of the intended support were the acquisition of books and other library material, the provision of library equipment and furniture, the support of information and study tours and also the manpower development and training. The only result of this memorandum though were the acquisition of library shelves and a book donation through the FES library. Especially the further cooperation with respect to a sustainable professional library organisation was not realized.

This certainly was also a result of a rather poorly developed library system in Tanzania with almost completely lacking facilities for the professional education of information specialists in the country. In 2008 the visit of Mr. John Chiligati, CCM Secretary for Ideology and Publicity, initiated a new phase in the cooperation between FES and CCM which again focussed on the development of the CCM library. The result of these first theoretical considerations was a two-week visit in the year 2009 of the new head of the CCM Library and Archive section in Bonn, the only trained librarian of this section, accompanied by a co-worker of the library. On the one hand this visit was meant to enable the CCM personnel to develop further ideas for the development of their own institution and to initiate an exchange of experiences with the aim to establish a professional administration of the CCM Library. On the other hand this process also enabled the staff of the involved FES departments (Library and Archive) to understand the special needs of the institution in Tanzania and the people that care for the Library in Dodoma. It was one important finding that not only the library equipment needed to be updated and not only books and computers have been missing to establish an efficient library, but especially the absence of a professional supervision hindered the development of this institution.

This was the main reason why the idea of a library training in the CCM Library premises was re-established, planned on the basis of the long-lasting professional experiences of the FES Library's work. After the decision had been made that a librarian from the FES Library should undertake a return visit to Tanzania in order to conduct a training in the CCM headquarters for the library staff preliminary considerations for this training comprised the current state of the CCM Library, the educational level of the CCM Library staff and special needs of the personnel in Dodoma. In cooperation with the FES office in Dar es Salaam the head of the CCM Library and Archive Section finalized a program for the training visit that encompassed many subjects of a complete curriculum at an average library school: Collection development policy, classification and cataloguing, digital libraries, Internet-based library services, library administration, marketing, library cooperation and general library policy. This comprehensive program proved the urging need for a professional basis for the further development of the CCM Library.

It was clear that the training in Dodoma could not encompass all the mentioned subjects in a way that staff members would be able to autonomously organise any aspect of the library's work afterwards. Nevertheless the general aim of the training that was conducted on seven consecutive days in November 2009 was to focus all the mentioned headlines of the program, but without causing a discouraging situation due to the mere amount of the facts, concepts and processes that should be imparted. This was a great challenge for the successful progression of the training, as well as the fact that many aspects of the factual situation in Dodoma remained unclear despite all further requests for an extensive explanation of the organisational and personal situation of the CCM Library to appropriately prepare the training.

3 Currently the CCM keeps another archive for its documents and papers of the parliamentary group.

The consequence was that the preparation of the training was nothing but a mere collection of very basic aspects of the work and the organisation of a library, and all details to this had to be added spontaneously on the basis of on-site findings. The training sessions were organised like workshops on the mentioned different aspects. Each day comprised two sessions, and every session lasted for approximately two hours. Each session has been introduced through a lecture on the particular subject, followed by discussions on the current situation in the CCM Library, special aspects of this institution and a collection of ideas for the implementation of new or modified procedures in the library. Three brief examples might illustrate the characteristics of these days:

- On the very first day collection development policies have been discussed. The CCM Library consists of a number of older books in the field of politics and sociology, a collection of CCM publications and few papers from other organisations. The basic idea of asking other organisations for appropriate documents on the basis of an identified and decided collection development policy was rather new to the library staff as well as the simple need for an analysis of the existing collection to be able to plan further steps. This together with the need to think about who is responsible for this part of the library's work among the library staff was the first kick-off for the library team for their future demand of making decisive plans for the library and for thinking about vision, mission and strategy of the CCM Library.
- The second day was dominated by questions concerning the cataloguing of library materials. With the exception of the head of the Library the complete team was simply unaware of the different ways of the descriptive or subject cataloguing. Consequentially the library did not have any catalogue or at least a register of its holdings. Therefore it was important to communicate some basic ideas of the advantages and necessities of library catalogues. At this stage it was less important to refer to a specific cataloguing system (like AACR⁴, the German RAK⁵ or the DDC⁶) than to consider the importance of any catalogue both for the librarians and for the patrons of the library. It is certainly not that easy to start cataloguing without any knowledge of appropriate cataloguing rules, but without a basic understanding of the needs for a catalogue the majority of all aspects of the library's work is determined to fail.
- Another day concentrated of specific aspects of the future development of the library, which also included the different ways of seeking for co-operation with other libraries. The CCM Library is designed to be an institution both for CCM members and officials as well as a public scientific library, for instance for students and scientists. Although the library team had already realised many problems during their daily work they were not aware of the many advantages that might arise from co-operations with other libraries. Due to this the idea of swapping materials on the basis of a regional inter-lending system was equally new as the possibility to also swap catalogues or organise local library networks to seek for new ways of support for libraries, all this with regard to the many advantages for their patrons.

These and many more aspects have been discussed during the relatively short training. At first it might look like a useless project to deal with that many different aspects in such a short time, but the feedback from the library team was highly positive. For most of them this was the first chance to hear about how to professionally organise their own institution despite all existing drawbacks. They certainly still rely on the substantial help of the FES, for example through the provision of computer sets or book donations. But besides this, the training was hopefully a start into a new era for this library as an institution that will be able to meet all needs of its patrons within the given limits of its

4 Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules, see also: <http://www.aacr2.org>.

5 Regeln für die alphabetische Katalogisierung.

6 Dewey Decimal Classification, see also: <http://www.oclc.org/dewey/>.

acting. As this not only comprises the services of a “normal” library but also includes the care for materials of significant historical importance this first training was intended to be only the starting shot for more supporting activities through the FES. This support will both comprise the provision of more technical devices and also include another training in October 2010 which is currently being planned. The aim is to finally shape an institution that will be able to organise the complete batch of processes and procedures without the help of others.

This is an aim that can be reached despite all problems that a developing country like Tanzania still faces. Archives and Libraries in Western Countries that deal with the history of the labour movement have a long-standing tradition to work on the basis of professional and well educated staff members (archivists, librarians and historians). If we seek ways to support organisations in developing countries we must think about ways to help them to establish a system where especially information specialists are generated to guarantee an adequate quality of work, especially for the further development of the historical sciences that have not only to rely on existing and appropriately organised primary sources but also on the professional services of information specialists. It is rather useless to seek for co-operations that neglect the importance of a professional development of the information sector, as this will result in even greater problems as soon as the beginning of the digital revolution also reaches these developing countries. If only one proof for this prediction is needed one should think of the batch of problems that is imposed on archives and libraries through the challenges of the long-term preservation of digital materials. It still is and in the future still will be the task of information specialists to organise both digital and conventional or analogue collections in a way that scientists and researchers can make use of them.

The way an institution like the FES Library can help in obtaining this aim might be limited, as especially the financial framework disallows a more extensive support, but the experiences of this co-operation show that there are still aspects whose communication are important for this process. Besides the simple motivation for a more professional organisation of the work within an institution like the CCM Library and the basic dissemination of information on the basis of our own experiences as indicated in the given examples this also must include the attempt to create an awareness for the fact, that the professional handling of books and documents is essential to preserve the printed memory of the country. The future of the CCM Library will hopefully prove the success of this aim.