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<u>Study visit report</u>

What kinds of services may a substitute media library offer its remote users?

A three week (June 9-27, 2008) study visit at the Deutsche Blindenstudienanstalt (Marburg – Germany) under the authority of Thomas Wendling.
Translated into English by Thierry Bonhomme.

Content

Introduction

The library service of the Association Valentin Haüy (AVH) in Paris of which I am an employee, is undergoing a complete reorganization with the upcoming inauguration of the "Médiathèque Valentin Haüy" on January 4, 2009. In the wake of the opening of this new media library, replacing and reorganizing the former sections (literary Braille, Braille music, talking book, audio description video library, large print books), we wanted to know what kind of services were offered by similar libraries, especially for remote users, and we therefore organized for a study visit with Thomas Wendling in Blista.

I stayed at the Deutsche Blindenstudienanstalt in Marburg, an association for blind and partially sighted people offering the largest library service for sight impaired people in Germany from June 9 – 27, 2008. The service includes a school library for the 300 pupils attending the junior and senior high school, a sound library and a Braille library catering for all blind or partially sighted German speakers, and a documentation centre on blindness and partial sightedness intended specifically for research purposes. Moreover, Blista coordinates and provides books to the central catalogue of DAISY format audio books inside the MediBuS network which includes the ten libraries for blind German speakers.

During my visit, I intended to find out how the German network of sound libraries and the central DAISY catalogue were operated, and what kind of services were offered to remote users. I also wanted to explore the reading room and the computer equipment used by the school library in order to consider possible adaptations of the model to the new AVH media library to be inaugurated in January 2009.

1. Presentation of the Deutsche Blindenstudienanstalt (Blista) organisation

The Deutsche Blindenstudienanstalt, or Blista in short, is the German reference structure for the education and training of blind people. But there is more to the organization, i.e. cultural activities and sports, assistance in everyday life (travel, basic daily activities) and rehabilitation, sports...

1.1. Situation

Blista is based in Marburg with various centres covering the following activities:

-        The main site is in Am Schlag 2-8, and includes school activities, the libraries, the document adaptation centre, the raised "models" workshop, administrative and catering services and part of the students' accommodation and sports facilities. This section of Blista is located on a small hill in the North Western part of town and its various buildings are separated by stretches

of greenery.

-        The second site at Biegenstrasse 22, is more adult-oriented. Right in middle of town and close to the main railway station, it offers rehabilitation activities such as mobility training, daily life activities, and it offers specialized equipment for sale.

-        The Braille printing unit is located in the northern area of Wehrda.

-        Finally, various accommodation sites for boarders who are learning to live an autonomous life are offered in various parts of town.

1.2. Targeted audience

Blista receives blind and partially sighted people of the Marburg area and from all over Germany. The junior and senior high school has 300 pupils coming from the various Länder, combining different accents, origins and traditions. Similarly, the raised "models" workshop deals with orders originating from all parts of the country, and the libraries even serve users from all German speaking countries and remote German speakers living in foreign countries.

1.3. Articles of association

According to Blista's articles of association, which can be downloaded on its website at www.blista.de (which I visited on June 18, 2008), the organization's official name is "Deutsche Blindenstudienanstalt - Bildungs- und Hilfsmittelzentrum für Blinde und Sehbehinderte e.V. ", which means "German school for the blind – Training centre providing means of compensation for the blind and partially sighted". e.V. type associations are not for profit organizations enjoying a status of "public interest" due to the kind of audience they serve.
Blista's headquarters have always been in Marburg since its foundation in 1916.

1.4. Missions and purposes

According to the organization's second article, the association aims at promoting the vocational and social integration of blind and partially sighted people. For them to achieve professional qualifications and social integration, Blista should first and foremost provide a good quality education.
To attain this high level of training and integration, the association is conducting scientific and technical projects to help research on blindness and partial sightedness and stimulate the development of technical tools and compensation means.
These actions have various orientations, always focused on education and training.

2. Presentation of Blista's library service

2.1. The various sections

The Deutsche Blinden-Bibliothek library includes the following:
- The Schülerbücherei Carl-Strehl: this is the school library which can be used by pupils and teachers of the Carl-Strehl-Schule junior and senior high school and by the blind and partially sighted people of Marburg if they want to. It offers didactic material, schoolbooks, fiction and non-fiction literature on the following media: traditional writing media called « print » (as opposed to Braille), Braille, audio tapes and audio CD;
- The Emil-Krückmann-Bücherei library lends Braille books to any interested users, with no geographical restrictions;
- The Deutsche Blinden-Hörbücherei lends audio CD documents in the DAISY format to any

blind or partially sighted users, with no geographical restrictions;
- The Internationale Dokumentationsstelle zum Blinden- und Sehbehindertenwesen: this international documentation centre on blindness and partial sightedness has a specialized section intended for researchers.

2.2. The environment of the service

The libraries are closely cooperating with other Blista services:
- The Braille printing unit and the Braille publishing service;
- The adaptation centre which performs Braille transcriptions, records in the DAISY format or executes the raised models of the didactic materials needed by the pupils and teachers for their classes;
- The raised "models" workshop which makes three-dimensional models (models, maps, plans...) for the school or outside users.
The Deutsche Blinden-Bibliothek also cooperates closely with the other 9 German language sound libraries and Braille libraries (Germany, Switzerland, Austria) inside a network called MediBuS.

2.3. Library staff

The libraries do not employ versatile staff. All employees are attached to one or two areas and can only perform a limited number of tasks. The Braille library and the school library have a common staff, but all are well aware of which section they are working for in all the tasks they perform.
Other workers are employed both at the library and at other services, e.g. the operators who can deal with users' book orders on the phone. These employees, who receive incoming calls at Blista's reception, must deal with all simple requests, regarding either the reservation of library books, the orders of daily life equipment (white canes, Braille watches...) sold by the organization or any school-related information requests. Only when they cannot answer these requests do they forward calls.
A few employees have had a formal training in library science or documentation science, i.e. the head of the library service, Thomas Wendling, his deputy for the school library and the Braille library, Helen Schweigert and the catalogue librarian who adds entries into the central DAISY catalogue.
In total the library has 14 full time employees, and an additional 4 people are employed in shared services covering library and other Blista services.

2.4. Library holdings

The holdings reflect the various sections and may include some subdivisions.

2.4.1. The school library holdings

The school library catalogue has 10,932 documents, which sums up some 40,477 volumes (most Braille documents are in several volumes). Various copies of schoolbooks and classic literature books are in stock.
The statistics below have been collected on June 23rd, 2008.
There are three separate sections covering the three available formats: print, Braille and audio.
- The print section includes schoolbooks, didactic material, reference books, fictions and documentary books. It has a total of 1,732 titles including 1200 schoolbooks.

- The Braille section includes schoolbooks, reference books, fictions and documentary books. The library has 1,694 titles in this section.
- The audio section features 1,425 fiction and documentary books, with a majority of fictions. Two kinds of media are offered: audio tape and CD.

The three sections are stored in separate spatial locations along format lines: audio books are located near the entrance of the library, with a further classification by subjects, while Braille and print books are stored on common shelves. These are further classified as schoolbooks, reference books and other documents. Print and Braille books are stored separately.

The library buys few Braille books as these are usually acquired through donations or agreements, especially as the Blista printing unit donates one copy of any documents which it publishes.

2.4.2. The Braille library sections

The Emil Krückmann Braille library has a total of 10,019 documents (figures obtained on June 23rd 2008). These books feature mostly fictions. Their renewal rate is limited, with only 80 new yearly acquisitions, but no specific clearance method has been implemented. This means that this is an ageing section, with little renewal as the future of the Braille format seems quite uncertain and therefore discourages investments.

This section is stored on two sites:
- the fictions on the Am Schlag site;
- the documents used by the students, especially in the fields of philosophy and law are stored on the Wehrda site.

2.4.3. The sound library holdings

The Marburg sound library which manages the DAISY central catalogue has the largest holdings of any MediBuS network partners.

It includes 6,471 titles in the DAISY format and 9,480 titles on tapes (figures as of June 23rd, 2008). It shows a typical 2/3^{rds}/1/3rd fiction/documentary books breakdown. Most themes feature both children and adult documentary books.

This sound section has the highest acquisition capability because resources are shared between the 10 MediBuS network member libraries. Some 1,500 new items, produced by the various organizations are annually added to the section, and the transfer of analogical recordings (on tape) onto digital media while conforming the DAISY standard further enhances this acquisition capability. The MediBuS network is expected to reach 10,000 titles in the DAISY format by 2010, when traditional tapes will no longer be distributed.

Library acquisitions are contracted by the various structures, some of which are well recognized on a few specific themes: Munster purchases mostly literature, while Bonn specializes in the field of philosophy and religion, and Leipzig in the theatre. Being responsible for managing the central DAISY catalogue, Marburg's purchasing policy aims at harmonizing the section, and its acquisitions are mostly oriented on documentary books in the fields of politics, social science, sciences and technology, geography and psychology.

The acquisition capability of all these structures is dependent on their budget and the availability of the recording studios.

2.4.4. The holdings of the documentation centre on blindness and partial sightedness (AIDOS)

This includes specialized journals and publications on blindness and partial sightedness, and memoirs and doctoral theses on the subject. The journals are systematically sorted and their contents are recorded in a dedicated database.

This stock contains 32,600 documents (figures as of June 2008) in the following categories:
- 12,000 monographies, periodicals and grey literature;
- 600 memoirs and doctoral theses;
- 20,000 articles from periodicals.

Articles were integrated gradually into the database in order to allow full text queries.

Most documents are in print form, but Braille documents, especially periodicals are also found.

2.5. Targeted audiences

The school library has 500 registered users, including all 300 pupils who are automatically registered in the library. Half of them attend the library on a regular basis to use the freely available computers or to borrow documents. The teachers are also registered. Some sight impaired people from the Marburg site who wish to be able to borrow books at the library car register for free.

The users of the Braille and sound libraries come from the Marburg area, and also from any other German Länders or even from foreign countries. Very few of them can get their books directly from the library themselves (the service is not intended to operate in this way), and books are almost exclusively loaned through a postal service. Users include adolescents and adults alike and the service is always free of charge.

The documentation centre on blindness and partial sightedness is open only to researchers who apply for service. Access to documents is on site only and subject to an appointment. Outside requests are unusual, and mostly originate from Blista staff who are willing to access available articles to collect information to write a paper or prepare a lecture.

All services are free of charge provided that applicants wishing to borrow audio books produce a medical certificate testifying to their visual impairment.

The opening hours of the school library are basically similar to class schedules. The library is open Monday-Thursday, 9 am-5 pm, and Friday 9 am-4 pm. Pupils over 18 may come and work outside opening hours provided that their parents allow them to do so.

The Braille and sound libraries lend books through mail loans. Users may contact the reading advisory service (Hörbetreuung) by phone during the whole week between 7.30 am and 4 pm. They may also voice their reading wishes through Braille or print mail or via e-mail.

2.6. Library operation

2.6.1. Applicable standards

Catalogues are managed according to the RAK (Regel für Alphabetische Katalogisierung) rules, with a few adaptations to match the various formats which are handled (management of the volumes and of the Braille copies, mention of adaptation format…).

Document indexation is made using the general and systematic classification for public libraries (Allgemeine Systematik für öffentliche Bibliotheken or ASB).

2.6.2. Developing the use of IT

The school library and sound library catalogues and book loan procedures are handled through IT. Both entities use different software tools, and no communication between the two catalogues has been considered so far.

Although the Braille library catalogue is part of the central catalogue, the book loan procedure is still manually handled (i.e. without using IT), which implies a greater flexibility in sending partial documents to the users' home (as Braille documents are particularly bulky, some users would rather receive the volumes in groups of 4 or 8 at a time).

3. The Marburg sound library and the central DAISY catalogue

The Marburg sound library is part of the MediBuS network, as are the other 9 German language sound libraries (including Germany, Austria and Switzerland). MediBuS is the unique representative for any discussions with the publishers.

For Braille, the central catalogue includes the production of the 8 German language printing units (it also mentions the prices of all the books for sale) and the holdings of all libraries.

It is commonly thought that the use of Braille books will decrease in the future, and that they will tend to be replaced by sound books and digital formats. This is why no major Braille project is being considered at present.

3.1. Building and completing the central DAISY catalogue

The 10 sound libraries participating in the MediBuS network have decided to combine their efforts in order to avoid recording duplications, to produce their books in a common format and with similar methods. To achieve this, some specifications have been defined, to be respected by all MediBuS network member libraries producing DAISY recordings.

The Marburg Hörbücherei is in charge of the DAISY format central catalogue combining all the catalogues of the various members of the MediBuS network. When a unit wishes to adapt a document, it should forward the corresponding information to the central catalogue which then informs them whether it has already been adapted, or is being adapted, or if they can go forward and do their recording.

When a new title is inserted in the catalogue, all members of the network are informed and may order it from the central catalogue. MediBuS members are also notified when a change is made to the recording of a title (to correct an error for instance), and they may order the revised version of the document.

All documents cataloguing and indexation is therefore performed in Marburg.

Although a centralized acquisition committee for the various members of the MediBuS network is still to be established, the Hörbücherei in Marburg in charge of operating the central catalogue, is responsible for harmonizing the collections and for prioritizing the production in those areas suffering a lack of documents. To be precise, the Marburg Hörbücherei has connections with the municipal library and the College Library in Marburg to make an annual evaluation of its acquisition policy.

Moreover, the MediBuS network has set up an extensive digitization programme to transfer older audio tape contents onto new DAISY format media. The operation is supposed to be over in 2010, when the network catalogue will boast some 30,000 DAISY documents.

3.2. Applicable standards

Cataloguing abides by the RAK rules.

The central DAISY catalogue, like most German libraries, uses the ASB. This systematic documentary books indexation system is actually directly accessible to users and may be used as a research criterion for simple or advanced searches using the online version of the catalogue. Similarly, documents are indexed in natural language according to the Deutsche National Bücherei's subject authority file.

Le catalogue also contains all necessary metadata for the upcoming introduction of the DAISY 3.0 format.

3.3. Consulting the catalogue

The central DAISY catalogue can be used in all library sites, for instance the Marburg library at <http://www.blista.de/dbb/katalog/>, visited on June 25th, 2008.

This catalogue is therefore the database used by all Web surfers registered in the various German speaking sound libraries to find out where the books they want to read are actually stored. Through this interface, they can order books directly from the libraries where they are located or from the Marburg sound library which, being in charge of managing the central catalogue, possesses all documents.

3.4. Management of book orders and production of CDs

All libraries in the MediBuS network have, in their catalogues, the books they have produced and the documents they have ordered from the central DAISY catalogue. The CD copies which they physically have in store can be borrowed from them.

But the Marburg library also produces CDs on demand to provide the books ordered by users. No copy is physically kept in store. Every day, a robot presses the CDs of the documents ordered the day before. The robot writes basic bibliographical information, the subscriber registration number and a bar code which will be used for recording the loan and for the document recovery procedure onto all CDs. All CDs are destroyed after they are returned.

For economical reasons, this "production on demand" operation is much more economically efficient than having to store and manage physical documents.

4. Services for distant users

4.1. Le reading advisory service

The reading advisory service deals with simple requests made by the users. Some advisors take note of the wishes voiced by the subscribers on the phone, though e-mail or traditional mail. They later get back to the users when their wishes list is empty.

The software used by advisors allows them to search for books according to the criteria submitted by the users: The "in-house" DOS programme yields more information than the Internet catalogue, as it is a different software than the one used for loan management.

The advisors answer such questions as: "Have you got such or such a book reference?", "Have you got books by such or such an author?", "Have you got any cooking books?" They provide specific answers or may submit lists of authors, book titles or themes.

Such lists may be printed and sent to the subscribers. Most of them would rather have print-type lists which they will handle with a sighted person. The service is free of charge.

The most frequently submitted requests are forwarded to the librarians who use them to establish

standard lists which are integrated to the catalogue available on the Internet.
Specific bibliographies may also be compiled on demand.
If a user wishes to obtain books through another library than Marburg, the advisors will then forward his request to the library themselves. All MediBuS member libraries are committed to offering the same service to their users.

4.2. The catalogue

4.2.1. On the Internet

As of 2007, the MediBuS catalogue has been available from all network members' sites. This is the unique Web interface for all web surfers using the services of the German language libraries. The URL for accessing the catalogue from the Marburg Hörbücherei site is:
<http://www.blista.de/dbb/katalog/index.php>, accessed on September 12, 2008.
The central DAISY catalogue data is exported to the online catalogue on a monthly basis.
This catalogue has been specially designed for optimal use with screen reading software (Jaws, Window-Eyes) and screen enlargement software (Magic, Zoomtext). Similarly, the order of the research fields has been devised specifically to allow the user to quickly define his or her own specific characteristics as a reader and avoid any display of unwanted results.

4.2.1.1. Simple search (einfache Suche)

Below are the various fields that the user must fill to launch a simple search:
- Search field: the words entered here are searched in all catalogue fields, including keywords and the summary. To narrow down the research, one may select the following fields:
- All fields (in allen Feldern)
- Author (Autor)
- Title (Titel)
- Thematic (Sachgruppe)
- Reference number (Bestellnummer)
- Date (Datum)
- Medium (Medienart):
- Audio and Braille books (Hörbücher und Punktschriftbücher)
- Audio books (Hörbücher)
- DAISY audio books (Hörbücher DAISY)
- Audio tapes (Hörbücher Kassetten)
- Braille books (Punktschriftbücher)
- Books in grade 1 Braille (Vollschrift Punktschriftbücher)
- Books in grade 2 Braille (Kurzschrift Punktschriftbücher)
- Place (Standort): any (egal) or to be selected in the list of Braille libraries and printing units belonging to the MediBuS network.

This is the most widely used research form. It matches nearly all kinds of requests, allowing the user to search for a specific document or displaying a whole list. It also makes it possible to order documents from one's own library or from any network member library.

4.2.1.2. Advanced search (erweiterte Suche)

The advanced search offers the following fields:
- Auteur (Autor)
- Title (Titel)
- Thematic (Sachgruppe)
- Order number (Bestellnummer)
- ISBN
- Date
- Checkbox: since, in, at
- Month and year field to be filled
- Medium (Medienart)
- Place (Standort)
- Reader (Sprecher) (only for audio books)
- Duration (Laufzeit):
- Checkbox: less than, equal to, more than
- Fields to be filled in hours or minutes

This form is only occasionally used by users with very specific searches.

4.2.1.3. "In depth search" (stöbern)

This page allows for thematic searches or searches in the list of authors. Criteria can be defined (e.g. a specific library or medium) and saved, and the user will be able to automatically reuse them next time he or she opens this page.

Selecting "thematic" (Sachgruppen) or "authors" (Autoren), automatically displays lists of links to refine the search as much as possible.

To search on "thematic", one may first choose between "literature" (Belletristik), "documentary books" (Sach- und Fachlitteratur) and "children and youth literature" (Kinder- und Jugendliteratur). The next page displays more links to further refine the theme. The ASB is used in displaying the documentary books, e.g. "F Recht; G Gesellschaft - Staat – Politik" (F Law; G social affairs, State, politics). The number of corresponding entries in the catalogue is mentioned after all category links. When a category does not include subcategories, the results are returned. To scan the list of authors, one should first validate the link of the desired author's initial to display the list of author's names beginning with this letter. But not all authors are included in the list, as some names are grouped, e.g. "Cather, Willa bis Cavelius, Alexandra" (from Cather, Willa until Cavelius, Alexandra); in this case a new list of links is displayed including the names of the authors in the group. This solution is somewhat inappropriate.

4.2.1.4. Displaying results

Results are always displayed in a similar way (Suchergebnisse), whatever the selected search mode.

Before displaying the detailed results, a link offers an RTF format download option.

The number of occurrences is also mentioned. Then all results are presented in the form of a link mentioning the occurrence number, the author's name and the title, followed by the medium associated with the document. The detailed notice is displayed by clicking on the corresponding result link. It mentions the adaptation's issuing library, bibliographical information concerning the publication, a short summary, the book's related themes, the reader (for sound documents), the collation. A link to the standard cataloguing data notice yields more details (ISBD data: especially the number of pages in print format, the original title, ISBN…)

All results provide some links to place the viewed documents on the order list (Bestellliste) or on a memo list (Merkliste).

4.2.2. On CD

These catalogues are sent free of charge and are the subscriber's property. They should therefore not be returned to the library.

4.2.2.1. The DAISY catalogue

This catalogue includes several CDs. Some selections are also available at the end of the Kopfhörer and Bücherjournal periodical. They always contain books for adults and youth alike on all subjects.

The documents in this catalogue are human voice recordings as opposed to synthetic voice. The catalogue presents the DAISY browsing functions and uses them efficiently.

The catalogue's structure is explained at the beginning of all catalogues or any selection thereof. It includes the categories, sub-categories and their subdivisions if any, always mentioning at what level the entries to the catalogue are located.

Here is an example taken from the selection of the Bücherjournal's 6th edition in 2007: "Documentary books category. Four subcategories at level 2: first, society, State, politics, economics; second, history, contemporary world; third, mathematics, natural sciences, medicine, techniques; and fourth, religion, philosophy, psychology, didactic material. No sub-categories; the catalogue's entries are at level 3, book excerpts are at level 4. […] Literature category. Four subcategories at level 2: first biographies, biographical novels, memories, life stories; secondly[…]"

The pagination is diverted from its intended original DAISY use and is used a follows: all pages are devoted to the presentation of a document; the page number shows the book reference number. The book information can then easily be retrieved by simply entering the page number, i.e. the document's reference number on the DAISY reader.

This use of the pagination also provides an easy away of completing the catalogue with new titles since the files will automatically be classified by reference number (it should be noted that the order number is based on a prefix which gives an indication on what category the document belongs to).

The document's bibliographical references, a short presentation and a few indications as to its adaptation (duration, name of the reader, issuing library, order number) are mentioned for all documents. An excerpt of the original sound book is then included and placed at the lower level. This type of presentation including an excerpt is very attractive, and the fact that the user can hear the reader's voice beforehand allows him or her to know whether he/she will like it or not. Moreover, with the DAISY "sentence" unit, the user can choose his or her preferred book presentation mode. A document's presentation has two "sentence", one for the catalogue's indications and the other for the excerpt, which means that the user may freely move between presentations or between excerpts.

4.2.2.2. Kijucat: the catalogue of DAISY documents for young people

This catalogue is included in 3 CDs which contain both text files (.doc, .txt, .pdf, .htm) and DAISY text+audio files. It contains the following items:
- Part 1 (CD 1): books with pictures, first readings, books for the 9 to 13 year olds; the reference numbers for all these books start with 16666;

- Part 2 (CD 2): novels and fictions for children over 13; the reference numbers start with 16667;
- Part 3 (CD 3): documentary books: the reference numbers start with 16668.

The text files have an alphabetical order by author and an alphabetical order by title.

The files in the DAISY format present contents by domain (Sachgruppe). The DAISY-specific browsing functionalities make it very easy to navigate between items, to choose to visualize the sub-items or not, to move between titles... At the beginning of all CDs, a presentation of the DAISY projects explains the structure of the catalogue and how to browse it.

To listen to the catalogue, the user can therefore use a Victor Reader or PTN2-type DAISY reader or he/she can consult it via a computer using a DAISY reading software to enjoy the synchronization of text and audio or use the text function alone.

The structure is explained, just like in the DAISY general catalogue: The items presented at any levels are indicated as well as the number of categories and subcategories, and, of course, at what level the catalogue entries are located for all categories and sub-categories. The categories are named, just like in the online catalogue, according to the ASB, for example: "Kategorie J1 Bilderbücher" (category J1, books with pictures; J=Jugend=youth).

The pagination is used in the same way as in the DAISY general catalogue.

4.3. Two periodicals issued by the library: Bücherjournal and Kopfhörer

To inform its readers, the Marburg sound library issues two periodicals in order both to provide information on a theme in relation with the library collections and to distribute the list of newly recorded and thus available titles. These magazines are sent to the subscribers free of charge and become their property. At present, they are still issued on audio tape and on DAISY CD.

4.3.1. Kopfhörer magazine (headphones)

Kopfhörer is the information magazine of the German library for the blind. It has three annual issues and is made by the advisors who are directly serving the public and by library staff. Unlike the Bücherjournal, Kopfhörer is intended for all subscribers as it deals with documents on tape, on CD-DAISY and in Braille format.

Listening to the magazine is a very pleasant and lively experience because of the change in voices reflecting the diversity of the reading advisory service staff. Listeners can thus hear the same voices which they are used to when they call the library. The audio form is very dynamic and lively, and the greetings at the beginning of the magazine and of the leading article, or a reader apologizing for having a hoarse voice because of a cold, for instance, just reinforce this feeling … Moreover, an introduction, read by a different voice than the one reading the article itself is presented before any article.

Kopfhörer has practical information (the libraries' closing dates, contacts, etc.). It presents the new documents made available for loan with their different media. It also includes articles on subjects combining culture and sight impairment as well as on Blista's latest production.

Some "preferred" library books enjoy a more in-depth and personal presentation with additional information concerning the author, his style, the contents or the plot, reasons behind the book's special "preferred" status, and an excerpt read by the same reader who did the recording.

To make the magazine even more attractive, all issues include a game, and the winners are offered a CD.

The magazine also includes a few articles and feedback, concerning the termination of the production of documents on tape for instance, or on how easy it is to move to the DAISY format, including for very old or very handicapped people.

Following all issues of Kopfhörer, a DAISY selection is submitted in the form of a catalogue on CD (browsing functions, reading of an excerpt …).

4.3.2. Bücherjournal (the magazine of books)

The Bücherjournal is sent to subscribers of the sound library only. This bimonthly magazine is written, recorded and published by the Marburg sound library.

All issues feature three or four current themes in literature or history. Here are a few examples: Spain, Catalonia, 1968, the 60 years of the creation of Israel, Doris Lessing, a Nobel price in literature. These themes are followed by the list of all related library documents available.

These thematic special reports are completed by information on the newly available titles (bibliographical information, short summary, information on the adaptation, but with no excerpts) and a selection of DAISY books similar to that presented following all Kopfhörer issues.

Just like Kopfhörer, the Bücherjournal is clearly intended as a periodical designed as a sound magazine directly addressing subscribers with greetings, oral transitions between the various parts of the magazine, which is much more rewarding than a mere series of read articles. This means that such expressions as "and now", "we are going to move on to", "this is our second theme", "thirdly" can be heard at the beginning of the sound tracks.

The clear structure and easy browsing of the Bücherjournal, CD-DAISY makes it very popular and subscriber feedback is very positive. The librarians can measure it through the number of orders for the titles in these lists which are published following all issues of the Bücherjournal.

4.4. Printing on demand

On rare occasions, some subscribers wish to receive an excerpt in print or in Braille from a book they have read. Users must pay for this service (the price depends on the number of print or Braille pages) but no advertising is done to develop it.

5. Workstations for use in the school library

The school library offers workstations which can be freely used by the pupils.

5.1. Usage conditions and spatial organization

No previous registration is required as enough PCs are always available. Pupils only have to mention their presence to the person in charge or to the librarian when they arrive, for PC use traceability purposes.

Since there is no phonic insulation system between the PCs or between the PCs and the rest of the library, each user of a speech synthesizer has to put on the headphones provided by the library. Most PCs are facing the windows, and partially sighted people may pull down the blinds if they are being annoyed by too much light.

The tables are very large, allowing the user to work simultaneously with the workstation and an open Braille or large print book next to it, and still having enough room to deal with their personal belongings and efficiently use the PC.

5.2. Configuration

The nine workstations may be used by either blind or partially sighted people.
All PC are installed with the following:
- Windows XP,
- Office Pack (Word, Excel),

- Internet Explorer,
- Acrobat-Reader-PDF,
- Jaws 6.2 screen reading software,
- "Magic" screen enlargement software,
- a Handytech Braillewindow Braille display,
- the DAISY reader (DAISY-Leser),
- the RTF-Convertor transcription software,
- the Duden on-line dictionnary,
- a Latin dictionary.
Other devices are also available:
- a few large screens,
- 2 scanners,
- 1 video enlarger,
- 3 print printers,
- 1 Braille printer (it is placed behind the librarian's desk and is therefore in indirect use).
All computers have a CD player and USB ports allowing users to save their data on their own USB key. A few machines still have diskette drives and poorly accessible USB ports but they are being gradually replaced by computers with memory card readers.
Although pupils are recommended to save their personal data on a USB key or on a diskette, no locking device has been established to prevent data recording on the hard disk, and such data are saved and can be retrieved after the computer has been turned off.
To allow all users to work and use the adaptive technologies that they need and customize their display without affecting the next user of the same computer, the very same configuration is defined upon starting the computer. .Although no adaptive technologies are started automatically, all users know the shortcut for initializing Jaws or how to start Magic using the mouse.

6. Possible adaptations

This section will address the possible adaptations of the Marburg library organization as described in this report into the AVH library in Paris.

6.1. Networking

The MediBuS network organization is highly beneficial to all its members in many respects: sharing of catalogues and the merging of existing catalogues into a central catalogue, common DAISY project (recording, mark-up and metadata standards); negotiation with the authors' representative organizations using the network rather than through the individual structures, etc. Although an exchange between various sections of the AVH library and other organizations has been established to mutually complete their catalogues, no common DAISY project has yet been officially defined.

6.1.1. The AVH headquarter's library and the regional committees' libraries

The libraries located in the premises of the AVH headquarters in Paris are the earliest library service for blind people in France: the Braille section was established in 1889, and the talking book section dates back to 1937. Users are from all over France, from French speaking countries or remote French speakers living in foreign countries.
Library sections were later established in the regional AVH committees. Today, 2 committees offer Braille documents and almost another 40 offer books in the DAISY format. All regional

sections are independent and they set up their own catalogue.

Regional sections which produce documents only assume the recording part, as the DAISY formatting is done by the technicians at the AVH headquarters. Any new title produced by a committee is added to the catalogue of the AVH headquarters and the committee may include in its own catalogue a title produced by the headquarters. Although the DAISY project is similar for all documents as the team in charge of breaking down and marking up the documents is always the same, the recording quality may vary from one book to another as only the Paris headquarters has sound-proof recording booths and professional recording equipment.

For all regional sections to complete their catalogues although they not necessarily produce documents, the librarians at the headquarters make a yearly selection of 50 titles which is forwarded to all committees.

The headquarters' sound library thus combines all titles produced by the headquarters and the committees in its catalogue while all committees have different catalogues.

The subscribers may be registered in one or more libraries but the widest choice they may have will be from the headquarters' library.

It is also worth noting that all professional librarians and DAISY technicians work at the Paris headquarters. Although documents may be borrowed from any regional sections, the distribution of cultural information (and especially the reading advisory service) is performed by the headquarters only.

6.1.2. Exchanges with other French speaking countries

With a view to constantly completing its catalogue, AVH initiated an exchange with its francophone neighbours. In 2005, an agreement has been passed with the Ligue Braille de Belgique based on an annual exchange of a batch of CDs (50 between 2005 and 2007, and 100 as of 2008). Both libraries may choose a given number of titles in their partner's catalogue; these are then forwarded as originals CDs which the library may distribute, but only in their original form, without any additions or deletions.

As this initial exchange was successful, a similar agreement was passed in 2008 between the AVH sound library and the Bibliothèque Romande de Genève (Association pour le Bien des Aveugles - Switzerland), and between the Bibliothèque Romande and the Ligue Braille de Belgique.

Such exchanges are a convenient way to efficiently complete the catalogue of all partner organizations. AVH yearly produces an average 600 new titles in the DAISY format, and with the agreement, it is in a position to offer its subscribers 800 new titles!

However, the exchange was initiated between librarians and not between DAISY technicians, which accounts for the fact that no common DAISY project has been established as of today.

In the wake of this success, the three European sound libraries started discussions with their Canadian counterpart with a view to further expanding their agreements.

6.2. Services provided to remote users

6.2.1. The reading advisory service

The longstanding reading advisory service offered by the libraries of the AVH headquarters in Paris now wants to become more professional. The librarians are now using a SIGB (Système Intégré de Gestion de Bibliothèque or integrated library management system) allowing them to offer subscribers lists of titles matching their requests. Moreover, as the cataloguing is now

managed by library professionals, it has become a truly reliable tool for our daily work. Contrary to Blista, the service offered in Paris is managed solely by librarians as a specific service clearly separated from the sale of specialized equipment and other AVH services.

6.2.2. Providing distant subscribers with cultural contents and information

The AVH libraries still offer no regular information scheme to their subscribers, except for the announcement of the introduction of new titles in their catalogue.

With the inauguration of the new media library in January of 2009, we will be able to offer new services on our premises; with a special effort for a new interactive and innovating initiative for our remote users.

The special events organized by the librarians for the sight impaired of the Paris area will now be recorded and later downloadable on our Web site or sent as an audio CD to any interested subscribers.

We are also trying to develop new partnerships with other organizations such as Cité de la Musique (a major French national musical cultural and exhibition centre) or the Centre National du Livre (French national book support centre) in order to extend their services to an audience of sight impaired people. The subscribers of the Médiathèque Valentin Haüy will then be able to access information on the exhibitions and conferences offered by the Cité de la Musique; audio recordings of the conferences will be made available to them, and AVH shall distribute a few bibliographical documents related to these events on substitute media (CD-DAISY and/or Braille).

Finally, subscribers will receive regular information in written, audio and digital form for a more lively approach to our collections. These will be, for example, thematic choices related to special literary or general events or a selection of preferred books by the librarians …

I was very enthusiastic about the idea of offering a bimonthly magazine similar to that of the Marburg library for the blind. As our subscribers are often isolated and little involved in their town's cultural life, they would appreciate having a regular contact with us through a magazine.

6.3. Offering adaptive technologies for Internet and IT use

6.3.1. Providing services over the Internet

Just like MediBuS who thoroughly reorganized their Internet catalogue interface in 2007, we would like to offer a new interface for our Internet catalogue in 2009. We are going to establish the WEBOPAC in relation with our SIGB (integrated library management system) so that users may search our catalogue at any time and get information regarding the availability of the documents and order them online.

We wish to be able to offer as much content as possible via our Web site, i.e. recordings, events taking place at our Paris premises, bibliographies, audio excerpts of some documents in our collections, etc.

Finally, we are considering the creation of a digital library which would make part of our collections available to all our subscribers who would want to read documents online or download them using a computer.

6.3.2. Free access workstations

Similar to the Blista school library's policy of offering free access workstations to its pupils, the Médiathèque Valentin Haüy will purchase and offer 6 computers with adaptive technologies and

one free access reading machine.

In view of how such equipment was being used in Marburg, and of the Schülerbücherei's equipment and configuration options, we were in a position to make the most relevant choices concerning our own future AVH scheme in Paris.

Although our choice of equipment is very similar to that of the Schülerbücherei, we are going to use the computer workstations in a different way in order to provide access to a more heterogeneous audience. We have therefore written a "charter of proper usage" for these workstations which will be very similar to the Internet charters in use in public libraries, and will integrate the specifics of having to use adaptive technologies on a regular basis.

6.4. Including sight impaired people in library staff

Although the projects of the Marburg and Paris libraries for the blind are quite similar in many respects, they widely differ on one major issue, i.e. the inclusion of sight impaired people in their own staff.

The AVH policy has always been to employ as many blind and partially sighted people in its staff to serve an audience of blind and partially sighted people. At present, 12 out of 18 employees are sight impaired people. All documents include a Braille section so that sighted, partially sighted and blind people may share a common writing system. All decisions regarding the premises and the software take into account the issue of access by sight impaired people, and our SIGB (integrated library management system) may be used by blind people in charge of cataloguing documents.

Marburg, on the contrary, has had very few sight impaired people it its librarian team since they terminated the use of audio tapes. Major economic pressure seems to prevent the integration of new blind and partially sighted people as librarians. Specifically, the software used by the library is not accessible to them, the documents have no Braille version, and the Braille library catalogue and the loan sheets in this section are only handwritten.

Still, we at AVH, think that peer service is highly valuable for everyone and produces added value which would not otherwise be attainable. Moreover, we fully take advantage of new technologies (through the use of bar codes, computer management of the catalogue and of the loan service, etc.) and of the professionalization of the sighted and sight impaired staff.

Conclusion

This study visit was a great opportunity for me to have a different experience to my own daily work at AVH, but still in a library providing the same kind of service, i.e. offering documents on substitute media for blind and partially sighted people. In the perspective of the opening of the Médiathèque Valentin Haüy in Paris in January of 2009, this insight into the existing organization of our German speaking neighbours was an opportunity to put into perspective a few aspects of our project, especially regarding the services offered to our remote users.

At the Blista libraries, I found out how a central catalogue was operated as part of a network of libraries, I saw the implementation of information and mediation periodicals for remote users and of free access computer workstations for the pupils registered in the school library.

However, the AVH project of implementing a modern library service intended for sight impaired people and managed by sight impaired people is highly specific. I wish to thank again all my German counterparts, who were quite surprised at our rather "utopian" project, for devoting the time and energy to explain their projects and operation and for attempting to find out, with me, how these could be adapted to the work of sight impaired people. I hope that our experience will

be helpful to them and will convince them that it is possible to integrate new sight impaired people into their own team.

Appendix

Glossary of terms and acronyms

AIDOS: acronym for Archiv und internationale Dokumentationsstelle für das Blinden- und Sehbehindertenwesen: International documentation and archive centre on blindness and partial sightedness

ASB: acronym for Allgemeine Systematik für öffentliche Bibliotheken: an equivalent system to Dewey, in which the first 3, mandatory, characters are letters followed by an optional space and numbers

Adaptive technologies: equipment or software allowing handicapped people to use a computer. For instance screen reading software (speech synthesizers), Braille displays

DAISY: acronym for Digital Accessible Information SYstem: enriched XML format offering extra browsing functions specifically adapted to the various handicaps

Hörbücherei: sound library

MediBuS: Mediengemeinschaft für blinde und sehebehinderte Menschen: association adapting documents to be used by blind and partially sighted people

Print: traditional writing and printing mode, in black characters on a white page, as opposed to Braille

Punktschriftbücherei: Braille library

RAK: acronym for Regel für Alphabetishce Katalogisierung: german cataloging rules

Schülerbücherei: pupils' library