

6 Political Areas for Library Policy

Libraries are naturally associated with culture. Books are culture, so libraries are part of it. The fact that libraries are linked to other policy areas such as education policy, science policy, economic policy, legal policy or social policy becomes clear as soon as one takes a closer look at their tasks. For example, decisions in the context of legal policy can change copyright law in such a way that libraries are no longer able to carry out their current tasks in interlibrary loans, as this already affects the sharing of digital resources in libraries. For targeted advocacy, all policy areas relevant to libraries should be analysed in detail. By looking at different policy areas, it is easy to see how libraries are involved and makes it possible to better understand how libraries contribute to these policies and how they can play a role for policymakers and library advocates, while also showing how libraries are affected by political decisions that seem to have nothing to do with cultural policy. However, there is no scientific definition of the individual policy areas here, as there have been numerous discussions and definitions of what cultural policy is over the decades (Steigerwald and Tröndle [eds.] 2019). In this part, the policy fields are pragmatically defined as the areas mapped in the ministries.

6.1 Cultural Policy

Libraries play a vital role in the culture of a country and especially a community. In small communities the library is often the only cultural institution. Many cultural events take place in libraries, such as promoting literature through author readings which is a typical and quite common way that libraries make an important contribution to cultural policy. It is also a small contribution to economic policy, considering the copies of books sold at readings in libraries. A particularly good example of an impressive number of author readings is the Würzburg City Library, which has invited more than 500 authors over the past 20 years, including Hatice Akyün, Walter Jens, Martin Walser and Juli Zeh. In addition to literary events and lectures, libraries also offer other cultural events with music, theatre or even dance, such as in the Erlangen City Library (Stadtbibliothek Erlangen 2014). Exhibitions are another traditional cultural offer in public and academic libraries, with *Das Kochbuch in Baden 1770– 1950* in the *Badische Landesbibliothek* in Germany in 2016 a typical example of these cultural activities (Badische Landesbibliothek 2016). New themes with regional and local artists, private collections of library users, environmental projects of school children and special par-

nerships have changed exhibition practice, with exhibitions becoming an important part of the general cultural life and attracting many visitors to the libraries. This large number of events and exhibitions organised by libraries also makes a significant contribution to cultural life in all countries. Another cultural policy issue is culture in rural areas, where in many communities the local library is the only place for local culture. In 2019 alone, more than 412,000 events were organised by public libraries in Germany (DBS 2020), and as this number of library events is continually growing worldwide, we can imagine millions of events per year as the contribution of libraries to world cultural events.

Libraries provide cultural goods such as books and magazines, art from their art libraries and multimedia, and are concerned with the content they provide. The use of the library and the use of the acquisition budget for the collection has changed further as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, and eBooks are thus playing an increasingly important role. Until now they have been treated differently from printed books; in most countries libraries can buy and lend any printed book on the market, whereas under current European law libraries cannot license and lend all eBooks on the market. There is a limited choice of licensing options, which are determined by publishers. The #eBooksForAll! (#eBooksForAll 2023) is therefore one of the most important cultural policy issues in the advocacy work of libraries worldwide.

In addition to its economic component, copyright has a cultural-political significance as the protection of authors' intellectual property. Libraries teach library users the basics of copyright and how to respect it. The interpretation of copyright is negotiated in the courts, where the economic influence of publishers is decisive. On the other hand, there are the cultural and political interests of library users, and this makes it a very important part of library policy advocacy.

Loss of cultural property and restitution are other important aspects of current cultural policy in which libraries are involved. This concerns Nazi-looted property, cultural objects confiscated as a result of persecution under National Socialism in Germany, particularly from Jewish owners. Intensive provenance research in German libraries has enabled a large number of books to be located and returned to their owners or their descendants. These activities are based on the 1998 Washington Conference and the subsequent Joint Declaration of the Federal Government, the Länder and the local authorities on the restitution of cultural property confiscated because of Nazi persecution. Elsewhere, the German Lost Art Foundation, established in 2015 in Magdeburg, provides financial support to cultural institutions for provenance research, with efforts being made to return cultural objects that were displaced as a result of the war and parts of libraries that were taken to other countries after the Second World War, and to support research into cultural objects and collections from colonial contexts (German Cen-

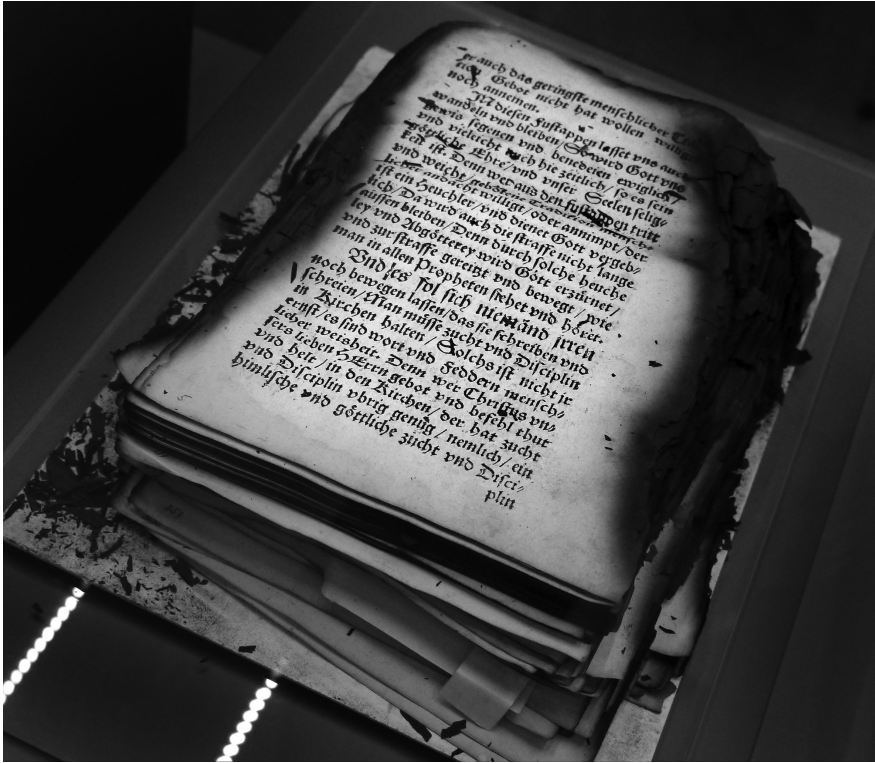


Fig. 21: Anna-Amalia-Library book destroyed.

Photo: Bodow, CC BY-SA 4.0. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Anna-Amalia-Bibliothek_-_durch_Brand_zerst%C3%B6rtes_Buch.jpg?uselang=de

tre for Lost Cultural Objects 2021). Libraries are actively involved in these important cultural policy tasks.

Libraries play a key role in the preservation and conservation of cultural assets. This can be seen in the restoration of precious books that were burned in the terrible fire in the Anna Amalia Library in Weimar 2004 (see Figure 21). In addition, digital preservation of cultural assets and preservation of digital works are cultural policy activities in which many libraries, especially national libraries, are involved. In all regions of the world, digital libraries are increasingly providing access to national treasures and historical documents as an important contribution to cultural policy and it is clear that different levels of government, from local to national, support these cultural activities of libraries. With an understanding of where and how libraries contribute to cultural policy, library advocates have a good starting point for demanding further political and financial support.

6.2 Education Policy

Education policy is a task for many political decision-makers, from the local to the national level. The importance of libraries for education policy has been well known since the OECD PISA studies, which have been conducted since 2000. More than three million 15-year-old students in 90 countries take the tests designed to measure their knowledge and skills, with library countries such as Singapore and Finland always among the top ten. Educational activities are a fundamental part of library work. It starts in the children's libraries with tried and tested concepts for promoting reading, which have been significantly developed in recent years through pedagogical research. Activities such as the creation of a reading bar in the Brilon municipal library in Germany, which correlates a child's height with a certain reading ability (Hachmann 2004), the media meter or the book babies, which can now be found in many public libraries, are an expression of this changed development. Worldwide, an enormous number of reading promotion projects have emerged, often with special support from private sponsors or city donors.

After a successful advocating campaign by various associations, the good examples of reading promotion projects from libraries in Great Britain and Singapore are also implemented in Germany. Reading starts with picture books for one-year-olds, which are distributed through paediatricians' surgeries, which is followed by a book for two-year-olds, which is distributed at medical check-ups. In the third stage, a book for children aged three and over can be picked up free of charge from the library. Each stage is accompanied by a booklet with detailed tips on correct reading and finger games, while additional materials, such as videos, are available online (www.lesestart.de). The involvement of public libraries in a national Ministry of Education project is something special, given the otherwise complex relationships between local, regional and national government. Advocacy by the German Library Association at national level has made this possible.

Libraries can also offer many events and activities in the field of cultural education, especially for children and young people, and in this way they make an important contribution to cultural education. Cultural education is not a balance between the two fields of cultural policy and education policy. According to the definition of the umbrella organisation for cultural education in Germany, the *Bundesvereinigung Kulturelle Kinder- und Jugendbildung* (BKJ), cultural education is defined as activities of young people that deal with different forms of cultural expression and show their perspectives and attitudes (bkj 2021). Increasingly, cultural education is being used in libraries as a programme not only for young people, but also for adults and senior citizens.

For intercultural library work, the intercultural competence of librarians is developed to meet the diversity of their users, with their intercultural training aiming at developing appropriate services. An important aspect of national education policy is the media and information literacy of the population, which is another important educational issue in which libraries are heavily involved. Public and academic libraries offer media and information literacy courses for all user groups, with the development of libraries actively contributing to this area of education having been gradual (Lux and Sühl-Strohmenger 2004). Libraries around the world have developed common standards and positions and present good examples and successful methods for teaching media and information skills. The focus is on academic libraries, but public libraries also provide impressive examples.

Cooperation between schools and libraries and the development of school libraries is an important contribution to education. Libraries approach schools to motivate more class visits to the library than the few required by the curriculum. A better option would be to advocate for improved library information literacy in the curriculum but, nevertheless, libraries can score with their support to kindergartens, schools and university students. Public libraries work with schools to provide homework help and individual support for pupils and these services have an incredibly positive impact on academic success, however, this is not sufficiently known to policymakers, even though the concept of libraries in media and information literacy is recognised by UNESCO (IFLA 2011).

Academic libraries have an important educational role to play at the upper secondary level, at the technical baccalaureate and at the bachelor and master level. For many students, university libraries play a crucial role in the success of their studies; it is here that subject-specific courses on media and information literacy take place, and where physical and digital resources are made available for dissertations and exams. Librarians need to highlight their achievements in supporting education.

The learning spaces offered by the library and the interaction with other learners in the library environment are becoming increasingly important for successful study (see Figure 22). Alongside cultural policy, education policy is the most important policy area for future demands on libraries, and it is in this area that the successes of previous projects can be demonstrated. Precise knowledge of responsibilities in a federal landscape is a basic prerequisite for advocacy, especially in education policy.



Fig. 22: Central Reading Room Dresden University Library. Photo: Henrik Ahlers CC BY-SA 2.0.

6.3 Science Policy and Research Policy

To what extent can libraries play a role in science policy alongside cultural and educational policy? The new role of university libraries in science and research, open access publishing and new forms of licensing are changing the game. These are important and sometimes controversial science policy issues, and some countries and many science organisations have developed an open access strategy. Another area of science policy is the idea of merging the university library and the central computing centre, which originated in the United Kingdom but was later reversed there in many cases. To avoid the risk of a simplistic view of savings through mergers, three partner organisations, including the German Library Association, have joined forces to form the German Initiative for Networked Information, *Deutsche Initiative für Netzwerkinformation* (DINI). The result is an organisation that supports and expands cooperation between IT departments and university libraries for the digital future. This counteracts the simplistic view of a merger as a means of subsistence, in the hope that savings can be made and better forms of cooperation can be found (Degkwitz and Schirmbacher 2007). DINI's advocacy has been quite successful, and where such mergers have taken place, they have usually been well planned and have

strengthened the university libraries, as in the German universities of Cottbus, Konstanz and Ulm.

Indeed, in many countries academic libraries play a recognised role in research policy and have developed close links with national research funding bodies to support open access publishing. Specialised scientific information services, digitisation and indexing, publishing and licensing, research data and software are important and topical issues in science policy. The role of libraries in science policy remains an important desideratum for any advocate, just as copyright and scientific use is an ongoing issue for academic libraries, together with the scientific community.

6.4 Economic Policy

The relationship between libraries and economic policy is not as obvious as that between libraries and culture or education. As evidenced by the total budget of twenty-one billion euros for publicly funded libraries in the German Library Statistics 2019, libraries have a good economic presence. At 461 million euros in Germany alone (DBS 2020), the media budget of libraries, which goes to the book trade and publishers, is also economically relevant. Libraries are important customers for publishers, who often produce many academic books in limited editions to meet library demand only. Copyright is also part of economic policy as it ensures the exploitation of intellectual property. Libraries are integrated into the economic system as they must pay VAT on services and customs duties on works from abroad. An overview of VAT in different countries shows that the majority of countries in Africa and South America have no tax on books or scientific books. In 2015, Denmark applied the highest VAT rate on printed books (25%) and Hungary applied the highest VAT rate on eBooks (27%), according to the study (IPA 2015).

Fixed book prices are a particular area of economic policy. With the certainty that a book costs the same price everywhere in a country, the diversity of the book and the book trade, and thus the cultural value of the book, can be safeguarded. Fixed book prices are an advantage for libraries in the organisational process of ordering, as there is no need to compare prices. Many European countries, Chile and Mexico, Japan and South Korea have fixed book prices by law, and in other countries book prices are fixed by trade agreement.

Figure 23 below shows the world distribution of fixed book prices. Dark orange are countries with book prices fixed by law; bright orange are countries with book prices fixed by business agreement; blue are countries without fixed book prices and grey indicates No data.

professionals need to be aware of international economic agreements in order to advocate for the interests of libraries and their users. This works even better with partners, as the activities of the German Cultural Council show.

The Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) (Deutscher Kulturrat 2016a) for Europe with Canada and the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) (Deutscher Kulturrat 2016c) for Europe with the USA, which are based on WTO decisions, have led to protests from cultural institutions who are calling for culture to be excluded from these trade agreements. The German Cultural Council, which includes the library umbrella organisation BID, opposes CETA as a blueprint for TTIP and fears that it will have a negative impact on the European cultural sector. Nevertheless, CETA provisionally entered into force in September 2017. As of January 2023, 16 EU countries had ratified the agreement.

6.5 Social Policy and Family Policy

Libraries play a role in other policy areas such as social and family policy. In many countries, continuing education and training are the responsibility of the ministries of labour and are now an integral part of working life. Libraries support learners and teachers in lifelong learning, with the opportunities for further education and training in libraries documented by many library associations. Librarians and information professionals show a highly active attitude towards professional development, with a wide range of opportunities available because of the extraordinary dynamism of the library profession. This is part of the lifelong learning programme, a concept promoted in countries such as the European Union and Canada.

There are also European funds such as the European Social Fund and other funding areas that are relevant to libraries in certain regions because of the role that libraries can play in the social development of a region. Social work in libraries is not only a concept but an important task in all public libraries and even in some academic libraries. Providing services for the blind and visually impaired, as well as applying for funding for equipment to make library use more accessible, are socio-political issues that can be addressed and negotiated with politicians. Social library work is also specific work for and with migrants and refugees, who in many libraries are motivated by special programmes to learn the language of their new country of residence, for social support, on specific topics for women, on diversity issues and in integrative reading groups for children. Refugees who are studying find special support in university libraries.

Intercultural library work has long been part of public library services which is seen by policymakers as a positive policy area for libraries because it supports

integration. Outreach library work, when elderly or disabled people have books delivered to their homes or retirement homes, is mostly done by library volunteers. The issue of volunteering is also a political issue that libraries are exceptionally good at addressing, and where they can clearly state their position on where the limits of volunteering in libraries lie. The employment of migrants and people with disabilities helps the library not only to fulfil its social responsibility, but also to live inclusion and reflect the diverse society in its staff. Social and family policy is part of library work in many ways and can be an extended field for advocacy.

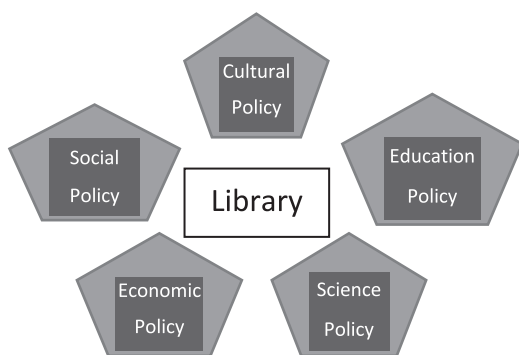


Fig. 24: Library and Policy Areas. By Claudia Lux.

6.6 Summary of Policies Related to Libraries

This section explains how libraries are linked to policy in many areas of their work (see Figure 24). It does not list all the policy areas relevant to the work of libraries, but aims to raise awareness of the many opportunities and starting points that libraries, unlike other cultural institutions, have for making contacts and advocating for funding. Library policy is not limited to culture and education, with every government department having policy areas that relate to the role of libraries. At the national level, in addition to ministerial libraries, there are special libraries in the health or justice sectors, or libraries in the army. There are also policy issues such as environmental policy, digital infrastructure and internet policy (Hösl and Kniep 2019) that are of great importance to all libraries, with the latter an especially important policy area for libraries, as the demand for high-speed internet in all libraries worldwide is extremely high but the realisation is still failing due to municipal and federal responsibilities. The IFLA Library Map of the World provides information on about 2.7 million libraries worldwide, but only about 374,000 have internet

access (IFLA 2023k). In addition, IFLA has submitted comments to the UN's research on a code of conduct for information integrity (IFLA 2024). It is important for library advocates to be aware of the diversity of policy issues to communicate successfully with politicians and administrators from different sectors and to offer cooperation and solutions.

However, this does not answer the most important question that is often asked: do libraries belong to cultural policy or rather to education policy? What do libraries belong to, or what do they want to belong to?

There is a rich literature on the discussion of a definition of cultural policy. It starts with the definition of culture, derived from the Greek *culere* – to care for – to the overly broad definition of the term that everything that man creates is part of culture. A narrower definition is then often used, defining culture around the concept of art and focusing on the artistic, creative element. For the purposes of this publication, culture is defined very pragmatically, and therefore imprecisely, as what is called culture in politics by the decision-making bodies and their executive organs. In the course of history, there have been different views and repeated arguments about this, as well as changing perceptions of what belongs to culture and what will belong to it in the future. Take the music of the 1960s, which was often pejoratively referred to as youth culture. Today it is an integral part of culture, even high culture, when philharmonic orchestras play the songs of the Beatles. At the same time, a positive relationship has developed with the term youth culture.

The argument about what is culture and what is not is not the subject of this article. The unexplained quotation, “Is that still art or can it go away”, which is said to have originated in connection with a work of art by the artist Joseph Beuys, can also determine the discussion about works in libraries. For a long time, films and computer games were not offered in libraries because they were not seen as part of culture. Cataloguing staff at a municipal library in Berlin refused to process video films by some outstanding film directors because of the violent scenes they contained, until the responsible film expert librarian explained the artistic value and significance of the films for film history. The discussion about what is worth collecting in culture, or more precisely in libraries, is always present and subject to social change. It is also part of the political discussion and can strongly influence advocacy. A clear position on cultural freedom, diversity and a library ethic that does not tolerate censorship is essential. At the same time, it can be said that libraries are always part of culture and therefore part of a country's cultural policy.

Cultural policy, like culture, is defined in a variety of ways, and these definitions derive less from political science than from actual politics. Education, science and arts policy, as well as some other policy areas, are subsumed under the

broad concept of cultural policy, and it is therefore not correct to contrast cultural policy with education policy. If, on the other hand, we look at the policy areas as they are allocated to offices and ministries, then there are clear differences between cultural and educational policy, and the question of which offices or ministries a library is allocated to can make a big difference to its support. As explained above, libraries are particularly linked to both cultural and education policies. Accordingly, in municipalities public libraries are sometimes under the responsibility of the education department and sometimes under the responsibility of the culture department.

On this basis, the Federal Association of German Library Associations, *Bundesvereinigung Deutscher Bibliotheksverbände* (BDB, now BID), together with the Bertelsmann Foundation, developed the strategy paper *Bibliothek 2007* (BDB 2004), with the aim for public libraries to be perceived more strongly by politicians as educational institutions. This was done against the background of the PISA shock of 2001 and the opportunity to bring libraries and their skills into the discussion. At the same time, the difficult financial situation of the municipalities played a role, with the budget for voluntary cultural services, such as libraries in Germany, decreasing, while education was somewhat better considered. The strategic reorientation in *Bibliothek 2007* with regard to education policy was successfully implemented by many public libraries with a stronger focus on the library and school concept. This changed again with the increased development of all-day schooling and new school libraries in Germany.

In connection with the new concept of the third place, which is neither school nor home, new opportunities for free, independent learning and creative activity are being developed in the library sector, while the promotion of cultural education has also been added. Looking across policy areas, there are many areas where libraries can play a positive, developmental role; a current example is the discussion on energy saving in Europe, where public libraries are an exception as the warm, good third place in the community. Another example is a project in Germany that focuses on small and voluntary libraries in communities with less than 20,000 inhabitants. Here, project funds are used to support the “modernisation and (digital) equipment of libraries in rural areas” (dbv 2020). The project demonstrates the German Library Association’s cooperation with the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media and the Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection, *Bundesministerium für Ernährung und Landwirtschaft* (BMEL), which provides project funding for the development of rural areas.

The practice of political action makes it clear that the question of cultural or educational policy does not arise for libraries, since both are always on the agenda; for this reason alone, no unilateral recommendations can be made, and

all possibilities of cultural and educational policy for libraries should be used for advocacy. Even in municipalities where the public library's funding is limited due to its clear assignment to the cultural office, it is possible to obtain additional funding from the education sector for homework help or the purchase of school-books, or even from the social sector for special activities with refugees. And vice versa: if the library is subordinated to the education sector, it can receive funding for literature evenings from the cultural budget.

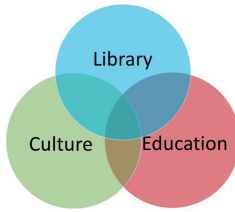


Fig. 25: Library, Culture and Education. By Claudia Lux.

The answer to the question of cultural or educational policy is equally clear: libraries belong to both policy areas and can also contribute to solving problems in other policy areas, as shown in Figure 25. This corresponds to the role that libraries want to play in the implementation of the 17 UN SDGs (see chapter 7.2) and opens up significantly more opportunities for all libraries to engage in targeted and successful advocacy.