

Cooperation and networking among archives, libraries and museums: some examples of good practice in Germany

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Düsseldorf is the capital of North Rhine-Westphalia, the state with the highest number of inhabitants in Germany. The city has a rich cultural history, in the (fine, applied and performing) arts as well in literature or film. Two very special examples of museums are the Theatre Museum and the Film Museum, both funded by the city of Düsseldorf.

Theatre Museum Düsseldorf

The Theatre Museum started in 1947 as donation of Gustav Lindemann. Louise Dumont (1862-1932) and Gustav Lindemann (1872-1960) founded and ran between 1905 and 1933 the private "Schauspielhaus Düsseldorf". They tried to realize their ambitious artistic aims in combination with the economic necessities of a private theatre. Gustaf Gründgens (1899-1963), student of Dumont / Lindemann, ran the "Städtische Bühnen" from 1947 and from 1951 the „Düsseldorfer Schauspielhaus“ in the difficult post-war times. He was the first actor of his theatre and impressed a generation of spectators. At the beginning the scope of the archive ("Dumont-Lindemann-Archiv") was restricted to the history of one theatre ("Schauspielhaus Düsseldorf"). At the end of the 1970es the collection profile and the tasks were extended to the theatre history of the city and the region. Exhibitions became a focal point of the activities, because the archive had own exhibition rooms for the first time. The term "Theatermuseum" was added to the name. Because the scope was extended and the names of Dumont and Lindemann faded away out of the public consciousness, the name "Theatermuseum" was chosen instead of "Dumont-Lindemann-Archiv".

Since 1988 located in a historical building in the "Hofgarten", the largest green space in the city centre of Düsseldorf, the museum had to face challenges and changes - as other museums. The concept of the permanent exhibition changed: the chronological presentation of theatre history in Düsseldorf was substituted by focussing on the location of the theatres and their meaning concerning the role of theatre in its historical context ("SchauPlätze"). Later this approach has been changed to the concept of an exhibition platform ("Museum für Zuschaukunst"), explaining the different aspects of producing and presenting theatre as well as the reception. Instead of a fixed permanent exhibition the aspects of theatre work are presented by presenting changing protagonists: by the presentation the life and work of actors, directors, costume and stage designers, dedicated to subjects pp. Information technology became more important as well: the museum offers a website since 2004 (<http://www.duesseldorf.de/theatermuseum>) and became participant in the project d:kult (Digital Archive of Art and Culture Düsseldorf). Because of the growth of the holdings and with regard to changes in the regulations concerning fire protection the collection had to move 2005 to a separate site. Last but not least the relation to the theatre practice has been enforced heavily, for example by presenting performances and other theatrical events, by offering workshops and seminars about acting, by initiating projects and festivals. The museum has now two sites: exhibition, stage, library in the city centre and the collection, located near by the university.

The Film Museum

The Film Museum has two starting points: In 1956 established city school officials the Düsseldorf Cinematograph of Culture and Youth in order to use film in school and for educational purposes. A bunker was built to store flammable prints. Within the ciné-club movement in 1970s the Film Forum, department of the „Volkshochschule“ (adult college), started holding film forums, and movie buffs flocked to them. Founded in 1972 it was transformed in 1979 to the Film Institute because of the great success. This institute had four areas of activities: training, the Filmwerkstatt (film production and equipment), screenings

(cinema „Black Box“) and collection (archives) management. The museum was opened in 1993 in a new building, funded by the state North Rhine-Westphalia and the City. The tasks and activities have been reduced to the running of the museum (permanent exhibition, education programs, temporary exhibitions), the archive maintenance and film screenings with the own cinema “Black Box”. The existing website (<http://www.duesseldorf.de/filmmuseum/>) has been reviewed and will be presented in a new way (expected in autumn 2011).

D:kult (Digital Archive of Art and Culture Düsseldorf)

D:kult started as a project in 2005 and was transformed to a permanent task in 2009:

- To establish an unified digital archive of the cultural heritage within the institutions, funded by the city of Düsseldorf
- To record and manage the complete holdings
- To organize a workflow to enable data recall for collections and cross over enquiries
- To present the collection together in the internet.

Meanwhile the number of participants has been increased: beside the pilot institutes other cultural institutions became participants, for example the City Museum and the Film Museum.

Since 2007 the project is coordinated and directed by the d:kult team. A central unit of museum documentation has been created. Beside the project manager three persons have been employed in order to support the project manager and the staff within the cultural institutions. These colleagues are professionals in the field of documentation and media design. They are trained specially in the facilities of TMS and other related tools. They are responsible for the administration of the data base, to introduce and train new users, to give advice and help during the implementation and afterwards. They are also the intermediaries to the department of information technology of the city and the producer of the software. Since January 2011 we work with the version TMS2010.

Beside the recording d:kult offers since 2008 the possibility to present the objects within the internet – called d:kult online (<http://dkult.duesseldorf.de/>). Each institute defines the objects, made available via d:kult online. A minimal standard for the description of the objects and copy right issues have to be taken into consideration.

Colleagues in the German and international museum community as well as in other communities, dedicated to the digitization, the protection and preservation of cultural heritage benefit from the experiences and expertise of the colleagues involved. For example the head of the project became member of the competence network for the German Digital Library – one potential provider to Europeana (<http://www.europeana.eu/portal/>). Members of the former project team share their experience and ideas with other users of the same software (user’s meeting on the local and the international level) and colleagues, using other collection management software to reach and implement professional standards for collection management in general (for example within the Working Group of Collection Management (“AG Sammlungsmanagement”), affiliated to the Special Interest Group Documentation (“Fachgruppe Dokumentation”) as part of the German Union of Museums (“Deutscher Museumsbund”).

Objects and related persons, institutions, media within d:kult

Within the Theatre Museum a data model was developed to reflect the complex information structures in a reasonable way. The main access point is the performance (“Inszenierung”). Around the performance we collect many objects (costumes, text books, posters, theatre

programs, play bills, press clippings, images, autographs and letters, audiovisual media, stage and costume design, stage models, requisites) related to the performance. Other important access points are persons ("Personen") and institutions ("Körperschaften"), which are related to the theatre and may be related to a special performance. But we have also objects ("Objekte") without any relation to a performance - they have a certain relation to the collection profile.

TMS (The Museum System), i.e. the implemented software, offers the possibility to create "virtual objects", which we use to record the performances and are used in the Film Museum to handle cinematographic information concerning a film, independent from the physical objects within the collection.

Because of the importance of performances we started to record the current performances in North-Rhine Westphalia, together with theatre programs and press clippings concerning these performances. After two seasons the clippings are transferred to the collection, including the change of the location within TMS. If we have additional personal resources we enforce our activities by recording performances in the past - going back, step by step, season for season. At the moment we have recorded performances since the season 1996/1997, but unfortunately not all performances are accessible online because some checking work has to be done. Further resources are theatre programs or play bills and books, published at the end of the era of a director in order to document their activities or on the occasion of an anniversary. In addition we record performances in the context of projects, for example a touring exhibition about Gustaf Gründgens, an exhibition on the life and work of Karlheinz Stroux (Director of the Düsseldorfer Schauspielhaus between 1956 and 1972), in the context of recording costumes of the German Opera on the Rhine ("Deutsche Oper am Rhein Düsseldorf-Duisburg"), the documentation of the production archive of the Kom(m)ödchen (cabaret at Düsseldorf, founded by Kay and Lore Lorentz) or the project H.E.T (Hamlet – European Transfer).

In the case of the Film Museum the work focuses on the revision and the clearing up of the imported data and the continuous recording – that means the conversion of existing paper files (including controlling the existing information) as well as the input of information about the new items, arriving in the collection.

TMS allows the creation of recording forms by the users, adapted to their needs without changing the database structure as a whole. So we have developed a form for performances and forms for the objects showing directly the related performance on the top of the screen. We defined core elements of description, too: author / composer of the piece, (music) director, set and costume designer have to be recorded as well as the location and the date of the first presentation. If pictures of the performance are available (for example on the web site of the theatre), a choice of images are archived within the media module to get a first impression of the performance. This pictures are normally only for internal use. But we put the information about the resource of the images and – if mentioned – the name of the photograph into the data base. So we establish on the long term an information tool about theatre photography in the context of our collection. Recording and indexing of photographs, belonging to the visual archive, is the task of the colleagues within the collection – these images are handled like objects as other visual objects, for examples paintings, graphics, sculptures and other objects of art.

At the Film Museum we have also developed recording forms for each department as well. At the moment we index the objects item by item in the film archive and the media collection. Within the image archive, the archive for printed material and posters we normally only record convolutes. That means: we know, we have a certain number of images or posters or printed information, but we are not able at the moment to record them peace for peace. Only a few very objects were recorded more deeply as well as the objects of the technical collection and some items of the exhibition. Here we had already detailed information and were able to import them into the database.

Other workflows are possible as well, for example the recording of objects shown in an exhibition, the import of data of autographs and assets from already existing digital resources, for example the finding aids to the assets of the Schauspielhaus Düsseldorf Dumont-Lindemann, of Karlheinz Stroux and a part of the asset of Gustaf Gründgens, and press clippings about persons.

All kind of objects can be enriched by adding media: they (i.e. images, data files, audio visual media, pp.) can be connected to virtual and physical objects as well as to the constituent module (persons / institutions) and to exhibitions. These media can be made accessible for internal use as well as for external use through d:kult online.

At the moment (in August 2011) we have recorded 2,400 performances (about 34,400 films) , about 39,700 objects (52,900 from the Film Museum) and about 8,230 media (6,200 from the Film Museum). Within the constituent module about 19,130 persons / institutions have been entered by the staff of the Theatre Museum and 26,560 from the staff of the Film Museum.

Archiving activities and exhibitions within d:kult

TMS supports all aspects of workflow within a museum. One important aspect is the documentation of activities and the establishment of an electronic archive. A part of the electronic archive can be found within the website of the museum. For each exhibition, presented by the Theatre Museum, at least one page has been created and is accessible there (http://www.duesseldorf.de/theatermuseum/th_mehr/tm_archiv.shtml) – even the exhibition is closed and there for disappeared. This kind of presentation offers the user only an impression of the activities. Another approach is the publication of an exhibition catalogue or an accompanying publication – but not every activity or exhibition can be documented by a printed publication. The exhibition module within TMS offers the possibility to prepare exhibitions as well as to document them afterwards. Because only a little part of our collection is yet recorded in the data base, the preparation of an exhibition within TMS is still difficult – it's possible, when the curator and other involved staff, preparing the exhibition, use TMS during this part of the work flow. We are still working on this aspect. If we work with free lancers or foreign curators, they need an introduction in to the work with the data base and an (timely restricted) account. Meanwhile the use of Office Programs is quite normal, but the use of collection management software and the data exchange between different management systems is not so easy.

At the moment we use the exhibition module as a substitute of an exhibition catalogue (for example the exhibition of graphics of Ingrid Mizsenko, inspired by her visits of the workshops behind the scene of theatres at Düsseldorf) or for the retrospective documentation. One exhibition on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the “Kom(m)ödchen” and on the 100th anniversary of Schauspielhaus Düsseldorf have been recorded in the exhibition module after the closure of the exhibition. One member of the curatorial staff has taken over the task to record the objects and document the exhibition by photographs within TMS. Other current projects are the documentation of the basic concept of the exhibition “Museum für Zuschaukunst” (presented from October 2009 to January 2010 at Düsseldorf), the recording of the works of the stage designer Christoph Heyduck or the presentation of an overview about all archives, convolutes or collections to give an impression of the wide range of objects.

Another point of importance is the presentation of projects going on behind the scene, especially within the collection and normally not visible to the public. In the past record or research projects presented as a result finding aids, exhibitions or publications, may be in printed or electronic form and sometimes reports on the state of the art during the projects within conferences or in order to get the extension of the funding. In this context TMS and the web presentation d:kult online offers the look behind the scene. If one work package has been terminated, a mile stone of the project has been reached, this part can be made accessible to the interested public and may raise interest to the progress of the ongoing

project. The colleagues, involved in the recording of and the research concerning the production archive of the Kom(m)ödchen, present their results step by step via d:kult online and inform the public by press releases within this context. A connection between information via the web site (“news from the museum”) and via d:kult online was made by creating permanent links.

Using TMS for this kind of public relations has advantages for both museums. On one hand the permanent, normally hidden, process of recording can be made visible to the public. On the other hand the presentation via d:kult can be seen as a motivation to enforce the activities in the field of documentation internally. Furthermore it supports the transparency internally and externally as well as the quality. Expertise and knowledge within the museum and within the whole project about cultural heritage can be exchanged via d:kult as a platform. One example in this context is the constituent module, containing information about persons and institutions, established and maintained by all participating institutions.

Forwarding information to projects on the national and international level

Within d:kult professional (principally librarian) standards and rules are used. Authority files for names (of persons “PND” and “AKL” for artists, of institutions “GKD”) are implemented as well as the authority file of subject headings (“SWD”), the classification of iconography (ICON Class - <http://www.iconclass.nl/>) in the field of fine arts and the thesaurus of geographical names (TGN). The software itself includes furthermore the AAT (Art and Architecture Thesaurus, unfortunately not yet translated into German) and meets the requirements of the British Spectrum Standard (i.e. the minimal standard for museums in Great Britain - <http://www.collectiontrust.org.uk/stand>). The discussion and participation within relevant communities enable the transfer of data into other information services on the national and international level.

The head of d:kult is member of the Working Group for Data Exchange, another group affiliated to the Special Interest Group of Documentation. After the implementation of d:kult online the forwarding of data to portals has taken into consideration. A sample of data was transferred to Europeana, the portal for digitized cultural heritage in Europe via Athena. In the case of the Theatre Museum only a part of the data, online via dkult online, is visible in Europeana, because the criteria for the presentation reduce the number of objects, because every object has to be linked with a digital image.

Within the context of providing information to Europeana, the German Digital Library (“Deutsche Digitale Bibliothek“- <http://www.deutsche-digitale-bibliothek.de/>) has been developed as the German contribution towards more digitization. The aim is to enable access to 30,000 cultural and scientific institutions (libraries, archives, museums). The concept and the project plan has been developed between 2009 and 2010. In 2010 - 2011 will follow the implementation and realization. A network of competence has been established because of the federal structure of Germany and the fact, that culture is a voluntary duty of the states, the regional and local bodies.

D:kult is member of this network and has the chance to take active part within the development of the German Digital Library.

The participation offers additionally the chance to get in contact with other important projects in the field of the preservation and documentation of cultural heritage, for example Kalliope (<http://kalliope.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/>) - the union catalogue of autographs and assets, maintained by the State Prussian Library (“Staatsbibliothek Preußischer Kulturbesitz”). Autographs and assets, owned by Düsseldorf’s cultural institutions are or will be recorded there – the data of the Heinrich-Heine-Institut, another participant within d:kult, are already imported to TMS, data of the Theatre Museum will follow as well as data of the Goethe Museum. From the other point of view an interface has to be created to enable the export of data from d:kult to Kalliope in the future – for example autographs from the production archive

of the Kom(m)ödchen.

The Theatre Museum and the Film Museum as small institutions had the chance to join collaborative projects on the local level. The participation enables the museums to make the recorded information accessible and visible in diverse contexts. On the other hand the implementation of such tools and the active participation influences the workflow and the development of the staff internally. A high degree of transparency, i.e. the documentation of the existing knowledge in the data base, the intensive occupation with the subject and the collection result in more efficiency and higher quality of the work and increased competencies of the staff.

Networking within the community

Networking is a very important part of the work within both museums:

- The Theatre Museum is member of SIBMAS (International Society of Libraries and Museums of the Performing Arts), the Film Museum affiliated to FIAF (International Federation of Film Archives).
- The libraries are members of the AKMB (Working Group of Art an Museum Libraries) and AK Film (Working Group of Film Libraries). The libraries participate in the Union Catalogue of Düsseldorf's Cultural Institutions (GDK) and present their holdings in different specialised portals: Art Libraries Net, Union Catalogue Film, Virtual Specialised Library Media – Stage - Film.
- Both institutions take active part in other associations and working groups – on one hand to have access to information exchange and to learn as well from each other and othe the other hand to present the own experience and expertise. Examples are: the union of museums in the Rhine region (Verband der rheinischen Museen), the German Union of Museums (Deutscher Museumsbund), the Union of Film Archives and Collections (Kinemathekenverbund), the Network of Media Collections (Netzwerk Mediatheken) ...

These associations are to be found on the regional, national and international level as well as in the context of the subjects, we are dealing with. Networking and the implementation of standards are for small institutions, like the Theatre and the Film Museums, the only possibility to meet the challenges: to preserve, to record and to make the richness of the cultural heritage accessible to the public and convince our sponsoring bodies to support our work in the future.