



Press Release

Spectacular Architecture, Outstanding Services

In Freiburg, one of the most modern and largest university libraries goes into trial operation

“The University of Freiburg’s heart is beating again,” proclaims Rector Prof. Dr. **Hans-Jochen Schiewer**: The University Library has gone into trial operation in a completely renovated building – and now ranks among Europe’s most modern and largest university libraries. “Not only does the new University Library make a spectacular architectural statement; it also offers its users outstanding services and an ideal studying and working environment.” The University Library has been renovated from the ground up since 2009. The building was designed by the architecture firm Degelo from Basel, Switzerland. The project cost approximately 53 million euros.

“The renovation and restructuring of the Freiburg University Library is the most significant and demanding project the University Building Authority has realized for the University of Freiburg in the heart of the city,” says **Karl-Heinz Bühler**, head of the University of Freiburg Building Authority (UBA). “The new University Library is a building of the 21st century. Together with the adjacent Municipal Theater and collegiate buildings, it forms an ensemble that represents the cultural heart of the city.”

With more than three million volumes of printed books and journals as well as extensive historical holdings, the Freiburg University Library is one of the most important research libraries in Germany. In addition, it offers access to almost 51,000 subscribed electronic journals and more than one million e-books. There is a trend toward digital publication, and the library’s historical

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holdings are also currently being made available online through retro-digitization. The library of the 21st century is thus much more than a repository for books, says Director of the University Library Dr. **Antje Kellersohn**: “We want to be the university’s comprehensive information and media provider and central learning and communication center” – 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The new University Library lives up to this claim. It offers 1700 modern workspaces, and patrons can check out and return media without the help of a librarian using a wireless data-transfer system (RFID). Conference rooms are separated from spaces for individual work: The south part of the first four floors, with views to the Vosges, the Black Forest, and the old town, accommodates reading rooms with 1200 individual workspaces and 230,000 volumes. The north part, which looks out on the Platz der Alten Synagoge, includes 500 spaces for group work, a room for exhibitions and events, seminar rooms, and a cafeteria. Another 700,000 volumes are freely accessible in the open stacks on the first underground floor, and where cars used to park there are now parking spaces for 400 bicycles. The closed stacks on the second and third underground floors provide space for an additional 3.5 million volumes. Another special feature is the University Library’s new Media Center, which brings together the cross-media student editorial team uniCross, including uni.tv, the university radio station echoFM 88.4, and the online editorial staff in a single building for the first time ever. Occupying 800 meters of space on the third floor, the Media Center includes two radio studios and a television studio. The fifth floor, where most of the library’s employees work, has an open office landscape that promotes exchange, while at the same time providing possibilities for concentrated work and private meetings.

All of this is designed to meet current needs, but things do not have to stay that way: “If needs change in the long term, we can adapt the space to meet them,” says Kellersohn. There are hardly any inside walls in the entire University Library, and there is neither a great hall nor a representative foyer. This allows for flexibility and optimal use of the available space. The concept is also energy-efficient: The usable space is just as large as in the previous building, but the surface area is nearly one-third smaller. The solar-

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control windows on the outer shell are triple-insulated, and the indoor temperature is held constant by means of well water and heat recovery. It is thus predicted that the new University Library will require up to 65 percent less energy than the previous building. Electricity is provided by a 2,000-square meter urban photovoltaic system on the roof. The concept is likely to catch on: Librarians from across Europe have already shown interest in taking a tour of the new University Library.

The beginning of operations marks the end of a complex process that started with project development and continued through the planning and construction phases. Project development began as early as 2003 with surveys, preliminary assessments, and project studies. Since it became clear early on that it would be necessary to evacuate the building during construction, the library had to find external storage facilities. Only the three million volumes in the underground closed stacks could remain in the building. The conversion of the former municipal concert hall on Alter Messplatz to an interim library and the acquisition and the refurbishment of the former administrative building of the company Schluchseewerk AG to accommodate the library's administrative employees were independent projects. The library moved into these buildings in 2008.

Planning of the actual construction project began with the unanimous decision of the jury on 26 April 2006 and the awarding of the contract to the architects and engineers. Construction started in 2009 with preparations inside the building, consisting essentially in the disposal of harmful substances and the demolition of the underground parking garage. The demolition of the upper floors took place in the course of the year 2011, and the shell of the new building was constructed above the remaining underground closed stacks in 2012 und 2013. Work on the facade began in April 2013. The construction of the outdoor installations began in late 2013 as the result of intensive coordination efforts with the planned measures for redesigning the city center. The installation of the internal technical systems required a largely closed facade, which was achieved in the fall of 2013. Most of the interior work was completed by the end of 2014, and the furniture was added in the first months of 2015. After passing all required inspections, the building was handed over to the university on 30 June 2015.

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“A long process of constructive teamwork between numerous participants has thus now come to a successful conclusion,” says Karl-Heinz Bühler. “High-quality architecture can only be produced when the planners, architects, and engineers are committed to fulfilling their tasks and responsibilities in cooperation with the owner and the users.”

The official opening is planned for fall 2015. Subsequently, the University Library will hold an open house, guided tours, and further events for the interested public.

Website of the University Library:

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