

Frankfurt Book Fair 2009



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Overview

The Frankfurt Book Fair is the largest book fair in the world. In 2009 over 100 countries and 7300 publishers participated, and about 2900 events, including talks, exhibits and workshops were held. The fair takes place in seven halls and it takes between 10-15 minutes to walk from the entrance to the halls. The international publishers were exhibiting in halls 5, 6 and 8 with all the publishers from English-speaking countries together in one hall. Stalls were arranged by subject area, for example, fiction or art, and these were located in halls 3 and 4.

China was the guest of honour and this was reflected throughout Frankfurt with museums and institutions hosting exhibitions on Chinese art and literature.

Publishers

I came into contact with publishers from countries that we do not normally see titles from as well as some smaller publishers - thus broadening the range of material to purchase. It was especially interesting to see the stands from countries we do not as a rule have access to, for example, Syria, Uzbekistan, Iran, et cetera. Many art publishers were represented at the fair which will be of benefit to our specialised art library. Central Library has just created a graphic/comic novel section and there were many publishers of graphic novels. There were also a number of specialised music publishers which will

benefit the performing arts and music library, broadening the range of materials for purchase. The availability of music material is limited in South Africa so the catalogues I brought back are of great use. Material for high school pupils is also one of the areas that the library struggles to find material for and there were several Australian and British publishers with the type of material we are looking for. I exchanged business cards with the relevant publishers and collected many, many catalogues. When the catalogues became too many I made lists of all the e-mail addresses.

Attending the book fair allowed me to speak to publishers and to tell them about the needs of our libraries and the types of material they struggle to find.

As a centre of excellence, Central Library is required to provide material of the highest quality and an extensive range that will inspire our community. One cannot only rely on what is available in the bookshops in Cape Town or at book selection meetings.

Electronic resources

E-books and e-readers were all the rage at the fair. There were also m-books (books for cell phones) and audiobooks. One really interesting item was *Enterprise: the entrepreneurs' game*. This is an online multiplayer game that teaches entrepreneurial skills using an economic simulation model. This fits in with Central Library's aim to encourage entrepreneurship.

There were talks about copyright and licensing which is the one drawback to e-resources. Central Library will have to have

an e-resource policy and my attendance at the fair has given me an understanding of the situation.

Digitisation

Digitisation of material was another topic covered. There were stalls displaying the equipment as well as companies, many from India, offering comprehensive services. As Central Library is in the process of digitising its pamphlet file collection, this was of great interest.

IFLA

IFLA was also represented at the fair. I found their book display really useful and the titles relevant to what Central is focusing on at present, that is, digitisation and e-resources.

Frankfurt Main City Public Library

Through Central Library's partnership with the Goethe Institute in South Africa I was able to arrange a visit to the Central Library in Frankfurt. I was given a tour of the library and it was interesting to find that they have some of the same issues as we do. One of these was restricting access to the Wi-Fi to control usage and costs. It is interesting to note that the library charges adults for a card to borrow material. Visits to other libraries are always important and useful as they broaden our network of contacts and expose us to new ideas and processes. It also allows one to rate one's own library against international standards.

Challenges

The Frankfurt Book Fair is so huge it can be overwhelming at times. For the first three days the focus is aimed at publishers and agents so a mere librarian feels a little overwhelmed.

Benefits

As senior librarian responsible for collection development at Central Library my attendance was of great value and has already had an impact on my activities.

It gave me the opportunity to interact and network with like-minded people from all over the world and it gave me an insight into the issues that libraries and the publishing world are dealing with. I am armed with a list of e-mail addresses and contacts to pursue. In fact, I have already received e-mails and catalogues from people I met at the fair. It was a wonderful opportunity that has made me return filled with enthusiasm and ideas.

Thanks

I would like to extend my thanks to the Carnegie Foundation for making my visit possible through their grant to Central Library. I would also like to thank the City of Cape Town Library Service for the opportunity to attend.



▲ ▼ Frankfurt Central Library



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