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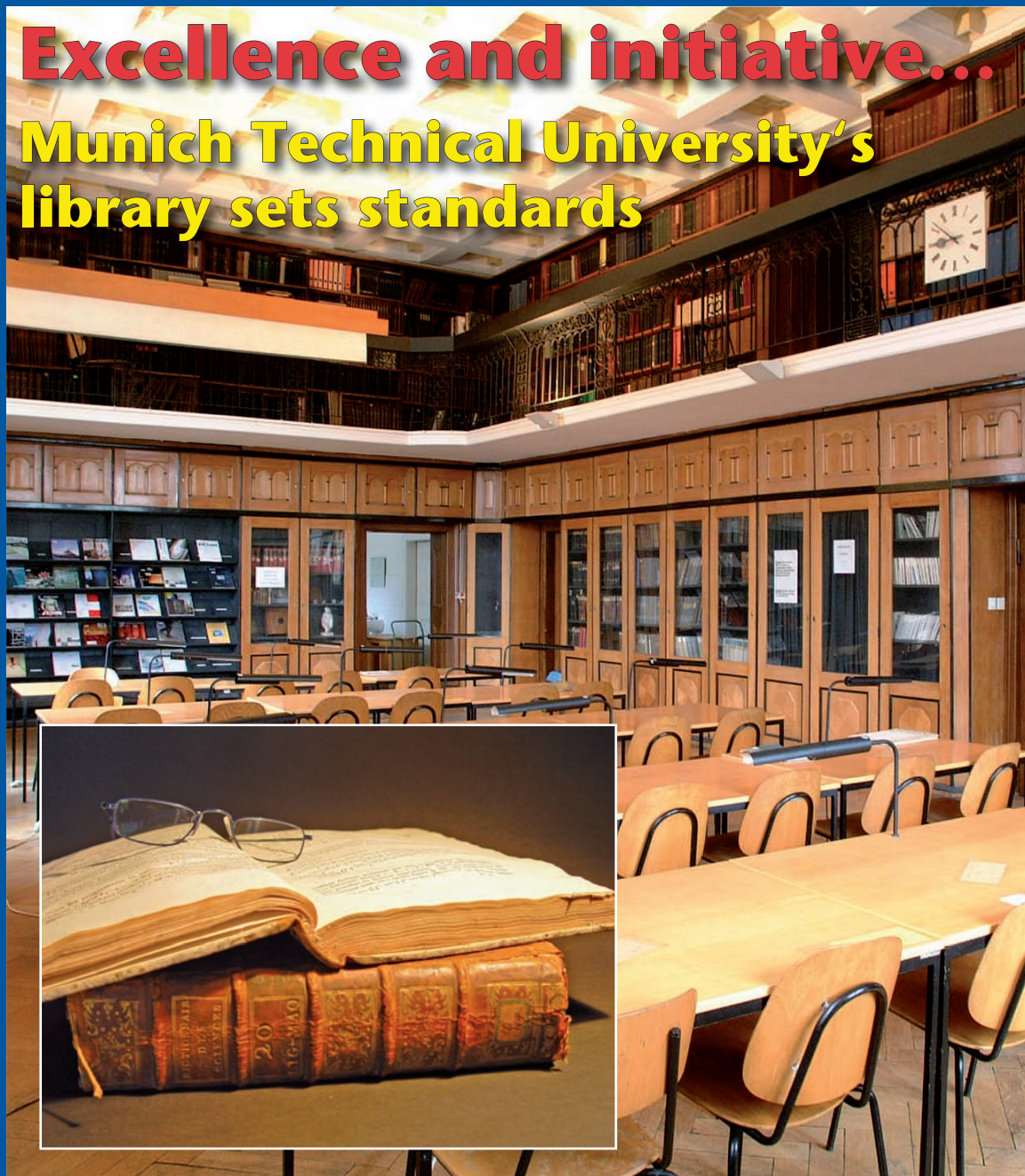
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Excellence and initiative... **Munich Technical University's library sets standards**



Excellence and initiative...

Munich Technical University's library sets standards

Klaus Engelhardt



The Federal Government's excellence initiative has made the university sector considerably more dynamic. Nine universities now describe themselves as "elite university". Yet they could never archive this elite status without excellent university facilities – especially without the university libraries. The companies that are involved in the development of these innovative solutions could also (unofficially, of course) describe themselves as "elite providers", because that's certainly what they are.

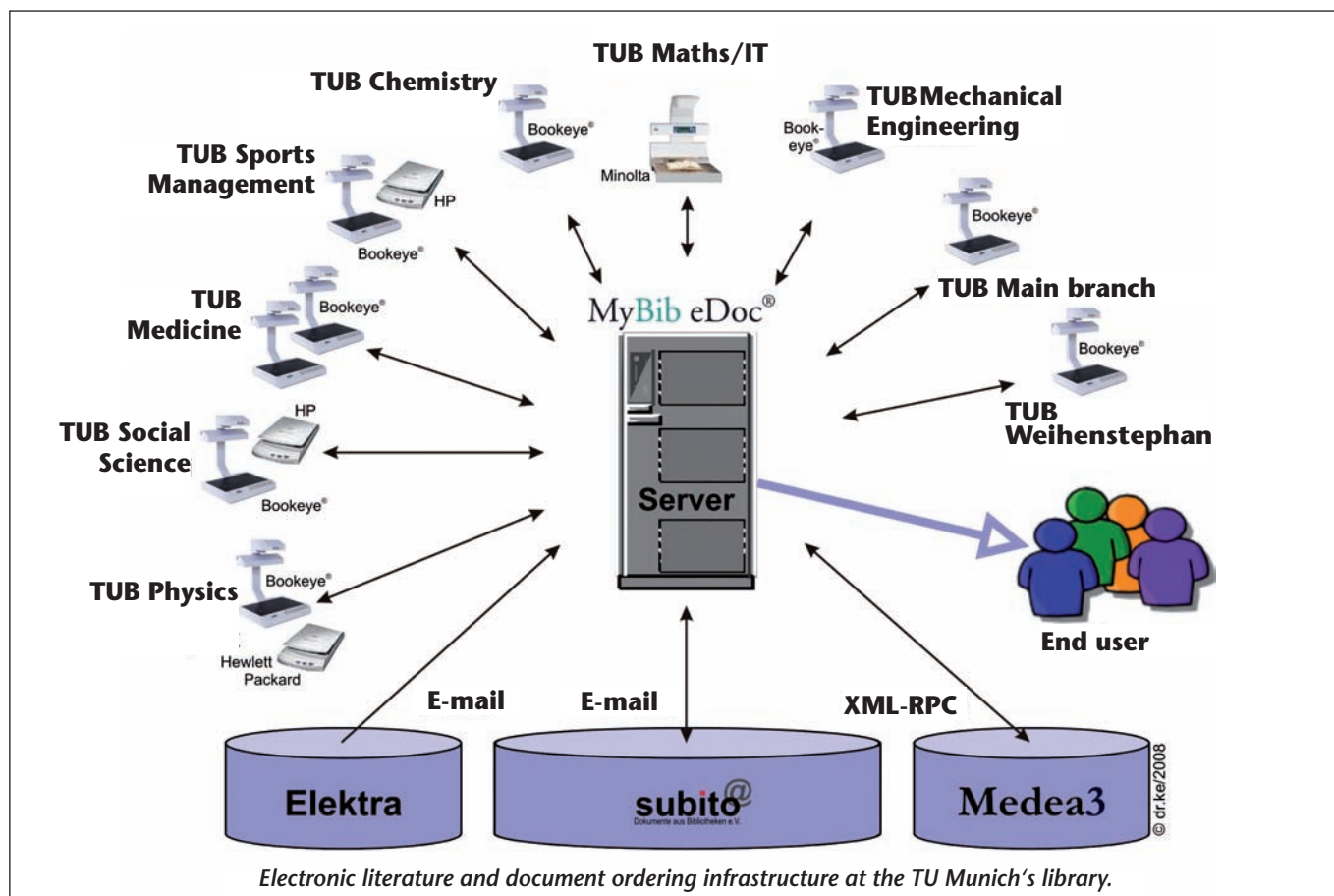
■ The library at the Munich Technical University (one of the first three "excellence universities" since the end of 2006) has been

setting trends in the European library landscape for many years when it comes to customer proximity, internal and external quality development and service range.

This wasn't always the case. Only ten or fifteen years ago, the majority of German universities had libraries that typically consisted of a vast number of stand-alone solutions. Each faculty, each institute and each chair had its own library, and they all staunchly defended their acquis. The Munich Technical University was no exception. It had over 200 libraries and literature collections of various sizes, all of which were determined to stay in existence. And since they were all individual entities, many different combinations of hardware and software were used

for the administration of the books. This meant that their response times to search requests and literature orders were often not particularly impressive. Another major deficiency was stock redundancy, which meant that the literature and magazine situation was less than ideal. There was no evidence of excellence.

In the end, the political decision to impose rigid spending cutbacks on university libraries was the logical one to make, and Bavaria was very consistent in ensuring that these cutbacks were made. In the Technical University library's case, this meant year after year of staff cutbacks, despite the constant increase in the number of library users and their more extensive service requirements. Over recent years, the number



of scientists at Munich Technical University has increased by almost 20 percent. In the same period, the Technical University's library's (TUB) workforce has declined by 11 percent. Other university libraries have not yet recovered from these sweeping cutbacks. This cannot be said of the TUB, however.

The motto is "Get the right information to the right place at the right time in the right format!"

The Technical University took the initiative and addressed the key issue of what kind of a modern service-oriented and forward looking library an international technical university ought to have. First of all, it implemented situation and process analyses. Booz, Allen & Hamilton, an external consulting firm, were called in to evaluate the library's performance. The evaluation generated a whole series of questions that made an important contribution to the sensitisation of all persons involved.

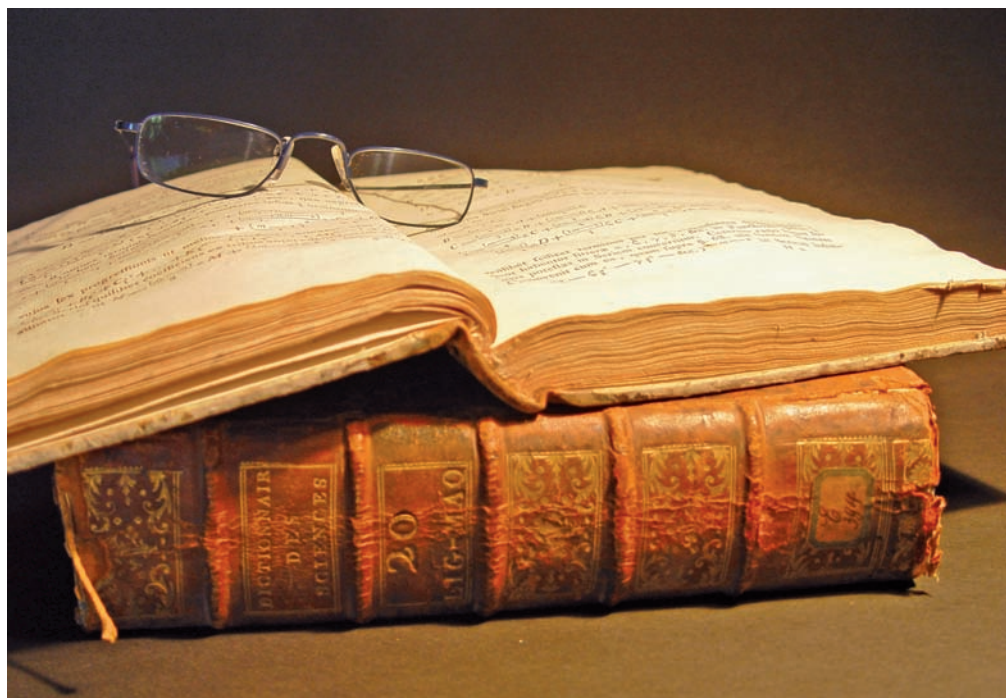
The TUB initiated a process that is still ongoing today and looks set to remain in place for many years to come. In comprehensive team meetings, workshops, training sessions, quality circles and other activities involving all of the TUB's staff and sites, the TUB's employees not only forged stronger relationships with one another, but also became willing to accept change, demonstrated personal initiative and developed a feeling of togetherness. The TUB managed to develop and implement a culture of change. The ideas, suggestions and change proposals that the various TUB teams came up with have now been incorporated the Technical University's model and are being put into practice by the staff. This model also includes a very flat organisational hierarchy.

This vital process, which is definitely not trivial when you compare it with the situation at other university libraries, is the basis for the TUB's success. Today, fewer employees than in the past perform considerably more comprehensive and complex services. Quality and customer orientation aren't just empty words, they are the TUB's selling propositions as service provider. It follows, then, that the TUB's activities are not regionally limited. It is a member of international networks and plays an active role in them.

This exemplary development is not something that can be taken for granted, and the process is still ongoing. The TUB team's mission is to review achievements and improve performance – despite the somewhat difficult situation. You have to remember that

Munich Technical University isn't a campus university. Its faculties and institutes are located in three cities; Munich, Garching and Weihenstephan (Freising). Obviously, this means that the TUB is distributed over several sites. It has nine branch libraries which are equal in terms of competence, customer proximity and service portfolio. The only one with a difference is the branch library at the main site in Munich city centre, because it is the location of the TUB's administration department.

The nine branch libraries focus on the fields of chemistry, mechanical engineering, mathematics/computer science, medicine, physics, sport science, social science, biological science, electrical engineering and information technology, architecture and civil engineering. This distributed structure imposes very special requirements on the development of efficient services.



Another reason for the key objective of offering equally fast document delivery services at all branch libraries is the TUB's geographical spread. This was no easy undertaking, because different services with their own delivery components are used for functional reasons: DokumentUM, Medea3 and subito.

■ **dokumentUM** is a web-based, university-internal order and delivery service. It enables users to make online orders of newspaper articles which exist in print format at one of the branch librar-

ies, and to have them delivered to their workplace.

■ **Medea3** was converted by the library network to electronic document delivery for the inter-library lending of articles. Medea, a system specifically developed for the library sector incorporating software by ImageWare Components GmbH, Bonn, which is installed in many libraries, offers many advantages over classic delivery methods for ordered copies. This electronic inter-library lending system at the TUB connects it directly to the Bavarian Library Association's (BVB) central Medea3 server.

■ The TUB became an active delivery library and member of the **subito**-Dokumente aus Bibliotheken e.V document delivery initiative in October 2004. All TUB branch libraries were equipped with grey scale and colour overhead scanners and flatbed scanners. Today, seven Bookeye® book scanners, a Minolta

book scanner and three HP flatbed scanners are in use. The document delivery system software is MyBib eDoc® by ImageWare GmbH, which already serves as the platform for Medea3 and dokumentUM.

MyBib eDoc® unites all three services under one single interface for scanning, administration and delivery, making it a key element of the Munich Technical University library's document delivery infrastructure. The technical infrastructure consists of the MyBib eDoc® system and the scanner

workstations in the nine branch libraries. It didn't take long for word to spread about the benefits for students and members of the Munich Technical University, and the service rapidly gained in popularity.

The TUB in Munich and the USB library in Cologne were the first subito document delivery libraries to install MyBib eDoc[®] by ImageWare, and they've been very satis-



„Reading room in the former „Architecture“ branch library“

fied with it. After only two years of using the software, in 2006, the TUB was "vice-world champion" at subito, which is a brilliant achievement when you bear in mind that 32 libraries in Germany, Austria and Switzerland were members of subito at that time. Overall, the TUB's MyBib eDoc[®] service offers excellent convenience for scan operators. It is yet another non-standard service that makes the system as a whole so popular with users. Orders for literature deliveries to the branch libraries, i.e. orders which are not electronically processed, are delivered quickly and reliably once a day by a TUB-specific commercial courier service to the relevant site. It is now impossible to imagine what it would be like without these site-independent loan optimisations.

Munich Technical University was one of the first three "excellence universities" in the state for a very good reason. It delivered excellent results based on the interaction of all parameters in the selection process at the end of 2006. Part of this success is certainly down to the university library itself, because without an established supply of knowledge and information, it would be necessary to reinvent the wheel all the time. In recent years, the university library has worked hard and successfully to offer services to users which form the basis of Munich Technical University's overall success. This has

now been confirmed by independent experts. In April 2007, the TUB became the first German university library to obtain DIN EN ISO 9001:2000 quality certification, and this is another field in which the TUB now sets standards. Finally, systems such as MyBib eDoc[®] made an important contribution to the library's success.

There are many arguments in favour of and against the excellence initiative, and there are some quick thinkers who believe that it is merely a political exercise to individuate selected universities. However, if these people think the matter through more carefully, they will realise that even the universities which didn't make the grade have experienced many positive effects. The resulting new spirit of optimism has made these universities more dynamic. In particular, their strategic thinking capability has been enhanced and resulted in many new ideas being put forward. Even the generation of questions about teaching and research is a positive effect. And when you look at the winner, it's evident that this has nothing to do with a political exercise, unless the money saved was spent for that reason alone, which does sometimes happen in politics. Take the example of Munich Technical University. The around EUR 150 million that it will receive as a result of the excellence initiative up to the year 2011 provide it with an excellent platform for building strengths and eliminating weaknesses. And aside from this commercial consideration, the initiative's success is clearly evident today by the fact that it has resulted in more widespread positive change at universities than any other university legislation in the past – even though not all of them are outstanding institutions.

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