



Librarian Spotlight

“I feel very much that it is a ‘people business’. This is a great strength of our profession that we should continue to cultivate”

An interview with Nicola Bieg



1. What made you decide to become a librarian?

I became a librarian almost by ‘accident’. After my degree in Literature and Cultural Studies, my first job was in the trade book sector, where I sold translation and audio rights. One day, I came across a job posting for a Licence Manager at TIB, which is the German National Library for Science and Technology – and has been my employer for the past three years. So, I am technically not a librarian by training, but as a knowledge-loving ‘book person’ working in a library, I feel confident that I can self-identify as a librarian by now.

2. What’s the best thing about being a librarian?

My favourite part of this job is attending conferences and fairs. I love travelling to UKSG, the German BiblioCon, or Frankfurt Book Fair and meeting all of the publishers, librarians, and business partners that I usually only talk to on a computer screen.

3. After a hard day, what do you do to relax?

That depends on the time of year. In winter, I enjoy going to the movies, reading a good book, or listening to podcasts. In the summer, I want to spend as much time as possible outside – going swimming, taking a walk in the forest, or having a barbecue in the park.

4. In your opinion, what are the most important skills to have when working as a librarian?

The ongoing digital transformation will uncover much more untapped potential when it comes to organizing scientific information. Librarians have many skills that come in handy here, such as structuring and analysing data, evaluating resources, and delivering them to their clients. However, I believe that flexibility and openness to adapting to new technologies and exploring new ‘fields of work’ arising within the library setting will be key to future-proofing the profession.

5. What’s your favourite place in your library?

The prettiest place in our library is the vaulted hall in the former stables that houses the reading room for patents and standards (see picture). Unfortunately, it has been closed for renovations for a while now.

6. In your opinion, what is the importance of the library?

As one of three specialized National Libraries in Germany, TIB plays a unique role in providing access to scholarly knowledge in a variety of forms – may it be a chapter in a printed book, a video of a conference, or a data set in an open repository. It is our role to ensure that all of these diverse ‘information pieces’ can be easily found, accessed, and reused by researchers (and the public as well). In a world in which science is increasingly under attack, I feel that the great importance of the library is that it organizes, disseminates, and safeguards valuable and trustworthy scientific information.

7. Is there anything you would like to share with other librarians?

There are so many interesting jobs in the library world, and I have greatly benefitted from gaining insights into other departments besides my own, and from exchanging ideas with colleagues from different professional backgrounds or other countries. We are all dealing with a lot of data and technology every day, but I still feel very much that it is also a ‘people business’. This is a great strength of our profession that we should continue to cultivate.

8. What is your favourite part of the day at work?

I enjoy when I can tick off all the completed tasks from the to-do list in my (paper) notebook in the evening – a very satisfying activity.

9. Could you give us one book recommendation that everyone should read?

Last year, I have enjoyed *Identitti* by Mithu Sanyal and *Wintering* by Katherine May.

10. If you had to describe a library in one word, what would it be?

Can I be poetic and use nine? A central node in the network of scientific communication.

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