



**Cologne  
Public  
Library**

2024/2025

Imprint:

Editing, Concept: Stadtbibliothek Köln

Printing: print24

Photos: Stadtbibliothek Köln, unless otherwise indicated

Release: January 2025



**City of Cologne**

**Public Library**

## The approach stays the same

Hello everyone! When I took over the directorship of the Cologne Public Library, I came full circle. I studied in Cologne, and after working in Munich, Karlsruhe, Würzburg and Essen, I have returned. A dream has come true.

My esteemed predecessor, Dr Hannelore Vogt, left behind a library of national and international renown. I thank her for this and will also do my best. Libraries are democratic places. They belong to everyone who is part of the vibrant mix that makes up the fabric of society. We do not discriminate; we are here for everyone in the city. We want to be a special place for all, a place where everyone is welcome, where everyone can pursue their interests, meet others and feel safe.

While our Central Library on the Josef-Haubrich-Hof is being renovated and upgraded for the future, we will have an interim location, a „little“ Central Library in the Hohe Straße.

Whether in the Central Library, in the branch libraries, or in the bookmobile, I promise you that we will continue to work hard in 2025 to create the best possible future for your Cologne Public Library.

Anja Flicker, Director, Cologne Public Library



## So long, farewell, until we meet again

We opened the doors of our Central Library for the last time at the end of June 2024. When the Central Library opened on the Josef-Haubrich-Hof in 1979, Nobel Prize winner Heinrich Böll gave the inaugural address. We wanted to celebrate the Library's closing in an equally big way, showcasing everything we had to offer.

Programs celebrating the joys of lifelong learning, civic dialogue, and music were held in June. The band Ahl Kamelle, from the sing-along concert series "Loss mer singe," kicked off events. True to the motto "Mer trecken öm me'm janze Inventar" ("We are moving the whole inventory"), the band delighted the audience with many musical gems from a treasure trove of songs sung in the local Kölsch dialect. Author Eric Pfeil's reading from his book "Ciao Amore, Ciao" took the audience on a musical journey through Italy featuring 100 old and new songs. Pfeil's story reveals a country torn between the dolce vita and impenetrable bureaucracy, of the mafia and love.





On the last Saturday in June, staff and public alike celebrated the Central Library. Once again, the Library's wide range of programs was on display. There was much to experience and discover, from a board game extravaganza featuring award-winning games to pen and paper sessions. There were dramatic readings and open events in the Makerspace. The musical program included a concert by the library choir "Kanti" and a live radio show with DJ sets. The finale on Sunday was provided by Johannes Stankowski and his band, as they took 200 parents and children on a magical musical journey.



During the last weeks before closing, the walls on the ground floor of the Central Library were colorfully transformed by personal messages from numerous visitors: "For over 30 years you were my go-to place," "Childhood memories 1986-2024," "Many thanks for many relaxing Sundays," "Thank you for making so much knowledge available!" We too say thank you to the many patrons and visitors who enriched our days in the Central Library.







## 300.00 books and media move to the Interim Central Library

The challenge of moving our collection to the interim location was made immeasurably easier by our patrons taking our #allyoucanread campaign to heart. Some even arrived with suitcases to check out up to 50 items. With their help, an astonishing 53% of the Central Library collection was checked out, thus reducing the number of items that had to be packed into boxes and moved. Over the course of the fall, many items were returned to our branch libraries. Since November, the staff of the Central Library have been busy shelving the collection in the basement rooms of the interim location in the Hohe Straße. We all eagerly await progress in the construction process of the Interim Central Library.

Unfortunately, defects in the static of the building were discovered during construction. Not foreseeable at the time of planning were the extensive structural repairs, including concrete reinforcement, that were needed. This delayed the first phase of the opening of the Interim Library, originally scheduled for just before Christmas 2024. During this first phase, the "Eckladen" (corner library) will be open. It will be staffed during regular opening hours and offer checkout and return services.





Since the collection is stored in basement rooms not accessible to the public, patrons can place holds on items directly in the “Eckladen,” or ahead of time online, all free of charge. The items will then be retrieved by staff and made available for pick up. During the second phase of the opening, three floors will be available to the public: the entry area on the ground floor, the basement level with the collection and operational services, and the first floor with the children’s area, combined café/reading/event area and additional collection areas. Workstations will also once again be available to patrons during this phase.

The entire Interim Central Library, including the second and third floors, will then be open to the public in the third phase. At this point we will finally be able to offer our patrons a “little” Central Library.





## 11,000 square meters, broom clean

It took only two months in the summer to clear everything out of the Central Library and prepare the building to be handed over to Züblin, the general contractor for renovation. Every shelf, every piece of furniture, all the technical equipment, the entire collection, everything had to go. Several thousand boxes with countless shelves of books, CDs, DVDs, games and more were packed up. It all went so smoothly due to the efforts of the many patrons who checked out more than half of the collection and so made the move much easier. A big thank you to everyone in Cologne!

The major renovation of the Central Library is going according to plan. Immediately after we moved out, work commenced. The construction site was fenced in and the gutting and building remediation began. Structural work starts in 2025, followed by the repair of the concrete components, construction of the building shell, installation of the HVAC and systems and finally the interior work.







## 16 years Hanne Vogt – we bid farewell to our esteemed director

On June 30, Dr. Hannelore Vogt retired as director of the Cologne Public Library, a position she held since 2008. Under her leadership, the Library evolved into a modern knowledge center, featuring innovative programs that foster exchange, experimentation, discovery and participation. In 2015, the Library was named the 2015 Library of the Year. It was no surprise that Hanne Vogt was subsequently honored as Cologne's Cultural Manager of the Year. She was also the recipient of the Karl-Preusker-Medaille, the highest honor in the German librarianship. As an internationally active mentor, she continues to advocate for the future of libraries through her involvement with the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) and the NGO Public Libraries 2030, located in Brussels. She is a co-publisher of a library journal and a Wikimedia cultural ambassador.



## Democracy education – making us strong!

Democracy can't be taken for granted. And the democratic process isn't self-explanatory. As the city's most visited educational and cultural institution, the Library's programs, collections and public spaces make an indispensable contribution to integrating social groups and assisting people in making informed political decisions. In 2024 the emphasis was on book presentations and discussions: "Niemand kann sagen, er hätte es nicht gewusst" ("No One Can Say, He Didn't Know"), by Marcus Bensmann of CORRECTIV, "Die verwundbare Demokratie" ("The Vulnerable Democracy"), with Maximilian Steinbeis and "75 Jahre Grundgesetz" ("75 Years of the German Constitution"), with Gerhard Baum and Kübra Gümüşay. These programs were accompanied by workshops for school groups and adults on fake news, research and media competence. The workshop "Kinder haben Recht/e" ("Children are Right and Have Rights") was done in cooperation with Lesewelten e.V. and a local theater group. "Rechtspopulisten widersprechen" ("Disagreeing with Right-Wing Populists") was done in partnership with the VHS (Adult Education Center). Many further programs are planned for 2025, such as using play to promote the understanding of democracy for preschool and elementary school children.





## The sprachraum – our visible venue on the Josef-Haubrich-Hof

The Cologne Public Library is maintaining an active presence on the Josef-Haubrich-Hof during the renovation. For many years our sprachraum (language room), a multi-functional learning and event space, has been located on the ground floor of the VHS (Adult Education Center). The sprachraum is a place for intercultural exchange and an open learning space for people from different backgrounds. Since July 1, 2024, the programs and offerings have been expanded. The daily newspapers and a large selection of magazines are available. The AI station is used in workshops and programs for school groups. The evening cultural program and Sunday events are also held here. One can work, read, or use the WiFi. From E-reader assistance, to 3D printer demonstrations, to the beloved baby storytime, there is something for everyone.

The Cologne Public Library is working with other stakeholders to promote the cultural and social revitalization of the Josef-Haubrich-Hof.

## Social media campaign "All you can bib"

With the closing of the Central Library, the services and offerings of our eleven branch libraries and bookmobile have become even more important. In the summer of 2024, the social media campaign #allyoucanbib produced twelve short videos in collaboration with a Cologne creative agency. While the videos showed specific facets of the Central Library move and renovation, our other library locations were showcased. The video clips take our followers on Instagram, Facebook and co. on a fantastic trip through the world of our branch libraries. They show what happens in everyday life at the branches, from the special workshops, programs and activities, to the extraordinary rooms and architecture. Every branch library is as unique as its neighborhood.



## Cultural programs at the Library

The Library's cultural programs focus on current topics and exciting new non-fiction publications. In 2024, the focus was on feminism and anti-discrimination. Julia Korb explored the power of the feminine collective as a political principle with "Schwestern" ("Sisters"). Author Mirna Funk presented eight theories from the history of Jewish ideas. In doing so, she opened up a new perspective on personal development, debate culture and political debates in Jewish life. She showed how we can learn from and apply these elements to our everyday life. Jasmin Taylor's very moving reading "Im Namen Gottes - Die Unterdrückung der Frauen im Iran" ("In the Name of God – the Oppression of Women in Iran") showed that we must not lose sight of women's rights in Iran.

The showing of „We Will Not Fade Away / My ne zgasnemo“ was a very special film event. The documentary follows five young adults from the Donbass region in the Ukraine. The subsequent film discussion with two of the protagonists was both exciting and emotional. In 2025, events are planned on topics such as democracy and social structures.





## A multimedia presentation in the foyer – the ACHT BRÜCKEN installation

"Feine Unterschiede" ("Fine Differences") was the title of the 14th annual Cologne ACHT BRÜCKEN festival, which took place from May 12-14 in various venues downtown. A special and very impressive sound installation could be experienced in the event area on the ground floor of the Central Library overlooking the Josef-Haubrich-Hof. With the ensemble work "Wald," ("Woods") by composer Enno Poppe, four string quartets were shown on life-size video screens. Violins, violas, cellos and double basses could thus be experienced individually or as an entire orchestra: a concert staged as an audiovisual and walk-in installation. This was the second time that a collaboration with the ACHT BRÜCKEN festival took place in this form.



## MINTKöln 2024 – Discover what colors can do

Colors were the main theme of the 7th annual STEM festival, MINTKöln, which took place during fall break. The festival featured over 100 free programs on topics in mathematics, computer science, natural science and technology. A colorful festival with workshops, readings and presentations awaited everyone. Nutty Professor Knallbumm researched the wide world of colors with children. The spectrum of programs went from working with natural materials to programming with colored LED lights to experiments with renewable energy to discovering artificial intelligence. As every year, the festival ended with the MINT-Aktionstag (action day). The multiple stations with experiments and DIY activities brought many visitors to the sprachraum.

*"Mama, you know what? I don't want to go to school. Can we visit the library again?"*

*Fynn, 7 years old, attended the STEM workshop on programming with Scratch, "Tarnen, Warnen, Lock – Programmieren mit Scratch Jr." at the sprachraum.*





## Presenting the archives

Preparations for the renovation of the Central Library and the move of the archives to several off-site locations in 2024 impacted the projects of the Heinrich Böll and Literatur-in-Köln (LiK) archives. Even Heinrich Böll's study, normally on full display on the second floor of the Central Library, will not return to its original form until the renovation is completed.

The archives' programs and events moved temporarily to the sprachraum and will in the future take place in the Interim Library. Despite the challenges presented by the closing of the Central Library, a variety of book presentations, readings and discussions took place. Guests included Nicole Seifert and Wiebke Porombka, who talked about the Gruppe 47, a society of German writers and publishers. In conversation with Hajo Steinert and Gabriele Ewenz, Markus Schwing presented his Cologne literary history. The archives participated in "Poetica," the festival for world literature. The poetry series "Anderland," with Marcel Beyer, Jan Drees, Birgit Kreipe, Ron Padgett, Steffen Popp, Monika Rinck and Jan Röhnert was also a success in the fall and spring.

In a conversation with Cologne-based author Peter Rosenthal, Anne Storch presented her latest novel. Kathrin Röggla won the 2025 Heinrich-Böll-Preis (Heinrich Böll Prize for Literature). The 5th volume of the prize speech series was published by the archives. In the first half of the year, we were able to present the topic "Heinrich Böll und die Musik" as part of the exhibition series "LiK im Fokus." The 50th anniversary of Heinrich Böll's novel "Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum" ("The Lost Honour of Katharina Blum") resulted in collaborations with the Literaturhaus Köln and the Klaus Bittner bookstore.





## NAO on a big mission

Giving our visitors insights into new technology and innovations is a priority for us. NAO, our beloved robot, took on this important task and for the first time visited all the branch libraries. He wowed the public with his skills and created a sensation in Cologne's neighborhoods. NAO's popular branch visits were well documented on social media, where he humorously extolled the highlights of each branch library and posed as a model. NAO will, of course, accompany us in 2025 and explore his new home in the Hohe Straße, among other things.





## AI has arrived

...and is not going anywhere! The Cologne Public Library is providing a variety of programs and workshops to educate the public about AI, perhaps the most fundamental change in media of our time. It is especially important and timely to provide opportunities for non-commercial experiences with this new technology for everyone, so that these new innovations can be treated responsibly. Our AI station provides a low-threshold introduction to AI with image and language models. With no prior knowledge, one can experiment with AI and discover what it can and cannot do. Among our educational offerings, school events such as the "KI & Du" (AI & You) module are very popular. Students learn about the pros and cons of using AI as a tool. Social discourse is also important. We spoke to Dr Mercedes Bunz, Professor of Digital Culture and Society, about a fair and democratic AI: how can politics, science and society work together to shape AI responsibly? We also stay in contact and exchange ideas with other libraries in Germany and abroad, who follow the developments in Cologne with interest.

## Three elephants and three experts...

... were the protagonists of "Kamfu mir helfen" ("Can You Help Me"), the 2024 "Junges Buch für die Stadt" (Cologne Children's Book). The latest selection in this popular program series is an unusual adventure story of an elephant with a big problem who gets help from his many friends.

This endearing tale is a family project by the authors Barbara and Dirk Schmidt. In the summer, the annual program week took place in cooperation with the Junges Literaturhaus, the Kölner Stadt-Anzeiger and the Kunstmann publishing house. As Dr. Dr. Felicitas Kippenpoot, actor Brita Weyers toured the branch libraries with her mobile veterinary practice in order to help the elephant and other animals including a fly, giraffe, dove, worm, hippo, cat and tiger. The children in the audience enthusiastically offered their assistance as veterinary technicians and, with their musical support, helped the elephant with his injuries.

© Jörn Neumann







## Traveling sustainably through the city

When it comes to sustainability and climate protection, the Cologne Public Library pursues a two-pronged approach. On the one hand, we are implementing our own very specific measures to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. To this end, we replaced the diesel van that serves the branch libraries with an electric vehicle. This was a significant step, considering how much the van is on the road. A low-emission cargo e-bike was purchased to accomplish smaller transports. Last but not least, the renovation of the Central Library will result in significant energy savings.

Our other approach is to create awareness and educate the public on sustainability and climate protection. One example of this effort is our project Floating Green, which toured the branch libraries and provided programs and a wealth of information on climate protection in 2024. Floating Green was sponsored by the Ministerium für Kultur und Wissenschaft des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen (Ministry for Culture and Science of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia).

*The project Floating Green  
was sponsored by*

Ministry of Culture and Science  
of the State of  
North Rhine-Westphalia



## The music library presents its wide range of offerings

### Lots of music in Nippes

Despite the renovation of the Central Library, our musical offerings are in full swing. The Nippes Branch Library now houses our popular grand piano and the choir "Kanti" rehearses there as well. A new highlight for all music enthusiasts is "Musik am Nachmittag" ("Music in the Afternoon"). Once a month, you can listen to a musician perform on the grand piano. Simply stop by, take a seat, or browse the shelves, and enjoy.

### Music instrument lending booming

Our music instrument collection, enhanced with additional analog and digital instruments, continues to be very popular with patrons. For beginners, those more advanced, for the adventurous or the curious: There is an instrument for everyone!

### Music programs for all

Various programs provide a low-threshold entry into the world of music. In workshops for beginners, notes, scales, chromatic symbols and note values are all clearly explained. Those interested in string instruments receive tips on how to use them correctly. The ongoing successful collaborations with the Cologne Philharmonic and the Cologne Opera offered the opportunity, after an introductory workshop or talk, to attend concerts and opera performances.

*Upcoming: Further workshops are being planned to give even the youngest children a basic understanding of music, along with a large dose of fun.*





## A new children's and young adult area in Porz

At the start of the year, the Porz Branch Library inaugurated its newly renovated children's and young adult area. On the "Tag der offenen Treppe" ("Open Stairs Day"), visitors were invited to Porz, situated in the far southwest of the city, to see the new features and participate in a digital scavenger hunt. A cozy meeting place for children, young adults, and families was created with funding by the state of North Rhine-Westphalia. There is new flooring, colorfully designed zones for different age groups, and comfy seating. There are plenty of workstations for students. The newly designed space offers opportunities for creativity, learning and entertainment. Visitors can meet other people, exchange ideas, and share their knowledge in a comfortable and beautiful setting. The redesigned space is an important part of the efforts to improve the quality of life in the heart of Porz.

*The modernisation of the children's  
and young adult area of the Porz  
Branch Library was sponsored by*

Ministry of Culture and Science  
of the State of  
North Rhine-Westphalia





## Porz residents create queer media art

As part of the workshop "(Re)Präsentier dich - Queere Medienkunst gestalten" ("(Re)present Yourself - Create Queer Media Art"), a special photo series was created in the Porz Branch Library. It was done in cooperation with ImPuls, a local youth theater, and Anyway, a youth center for LGBTIQ+ youth in Cologne. In a brainstorming session, teens and young adults explored how they wanted to express themselves. The result was a seven piece photo series christened "RegenbogenLeben" ("RainbowLife"), featuring the young people wearing outfits they put together themselves. We were delighted that objects, furniture and decorations from the Library were used in staging the photos, which enlivened the walls of the Library and showed how colorful we really are!

The large format photos, printed with support from the city's LGBTIA+ office, made the exhibit available to a larger audience at the Porz Branch Library.



## 20 Years Friends of the Library

Our Friends of the Library group celebrated its 20-year anniversary the same weekend we closed the Central Library. Since June 29, 2004, the association, Förderverein Stadtbibliothek Köln e.V., has been involved in a wide range of activities to promote reading and language development. The association and its members, under the leadership of presidents Anton Bausinger and Annette Imhoff, support the work of the Cologne Public Library with innovative projects, especially the creation and transformation of new public spaces. With the unique minibibs (mini libraries), the association has conceptualised and implemented architectural jewels that have attracted national attention. With their originality, charm, lack of bureaucracy and free access, the minibib concept promotes the Library's mission.

The petition launched by the association in 2023 to renovate, instead of demolish, the Central Library and keep it on the Josef-Haubrich-Hof garnered much attention in the community.





## Online registration with BundID

You can now become a permanent member of the Library without stepping foot into the building! In addition to the wide range of digital services that can be used from home, library cards can now also be applied for online. A new registration form linked to the BundID system enables automatic authentication of personal data. After processing by our customer services department, E-media and databases can be used immediately with an online ID sent via email; the corresponding library card can also be mailed. In 2025, this convenient option will also be expanded to include discounted memberships as well.

## We are part of the city's recruiting campaign

"Mach Köln!" Deine Stadt. Dein Job" („Make Cologne! Your city. Your job") is the city's large-scale recruiting campaign. Personal portraits show how the approximately 22,000 city employees make the city more beautiful, colorful, liveable, and stronger. Bodo Pohla spoke on behalf of his team about his job as manager of a branch library. A YouTube video and a shorter social media clip, as well as photos for posters and City Lights (city-wide advertising banners) were created. You can look forward to the results. We hope that this will spark an interest in young people pursuing a career in the library field as a librarian or library assistant.







## Germany's library directors meet in Cologne

Even though the Central Library is closed for renovation, the Cologne Public Library is always worth a visit! That was the case for the 20 directors of Germany's largest public libraries - Zurich and Vienna were also represented - who held their fall conference in Cologne. Among other things, future strategies and the important role of libraries in urban development were discussed. The Kalk Branch Library and our extensive program portfolio served as good examples of this. The directors visited the Interim Library in the Hohe Straße as well, in order to see how the building was being prepared for opening.

Anja Flicker, who took part on behalf of the Essen Public Library, also received the good news of her appointment as the new director of the Cologne Public Library starting January 1, 2025. She was therefore able to combine her visit to Cologne with initial conversations and introduce herself to the city's Art and Culture Commission.

## Facts and Figures

### The Library System

Central Library	Children's Library, Music Library, Makerspace, MINTspace, sprachraum, Heinrich-Böll Archive, Literature in Cologne Archive (LiK), Audio Library for the Blind and Visually Impaired, Germania Judaica e.V. Library (closed since July 1, 2024 for renovation)
Branch Libraries	11 branch libraries and the minibib in Chorweiler (The Sülz Branch Library is currently closed for renovation)
Busbibliothek	18 stops

Programs	Despite the closing of Central Library, 2,143 programs were offered system-wide in 2024
----------	---

Outside funding	In 2024 we acquired 398,438.38 Euro in outside funding.
-----------------	---

## 2023 Most Popular Checkouts

Fiction	<i>Caroline Wahl: 22 Bahnen</i>
Non-Fiction	<i>Anne Fleck: Energy!</i>
Children's Book	<i>Margit Auer: Der Gurkenschurke (Die Schule der magischen Tiere ermittelt, Bd. 5)</i>
Audiobook	<i>Elke Heidenreich liest live Frau Dr. Moormann &amp; ich</i>
Film	<i>Barbie</i>
Children's Film	<i>Paw Patrol - der Mighty Kinofilm</i>
Music CD	<i>Taylor Swift: 1989 - Taylors Version</i>

## Social Media

Instagram	6443 follower (+866)
Facebook	7400 followers (+/-0)
Mastodon (since March 2023)	844 followers (+120)
Bluesky (since March 2023)	478 followers (+253)

## Staff

Positions	158,5
Staff	246 (46 of these are temporary staff for weekends)
Volunteers	205

