
Knowledge Management Theory in Action

A satellite meeting presented by the
IFLA Knowledge Management Section
Helsinki, Finland, 10 August 2012



13.08.2012

Anja Flicker – Director Würzburg Public Library



1/31

1. A vision of innovative libraries as structural capital of their cities

When I think of libraries in the future, I like to imagine agile, innovative, attractive places. They offer their customers a variety of media and services, according to the customers' needs – and beyond! Meaning

- a) beyond the customers' *needs* of today and
- b) beyond the *customers* of today

Libraries of the future observe society's cultural, technological and media developments and develop the library as a place, the employees' skills and the services in anticipation of society's needs to come.

These future libraries are success factors within their city's structural capital.

We will come back to this structural capital topic later.

But first let me introduce myself and make you understand why I want to talk about KM today – *and* about Intellectual Capital Management.

Munich Public Library
Knowledge manager in SMEs
Knowledge manager of the year
Funding member New Club of Paris
Advisory board German KM Society



Würzburg Public Library



13.08.2012
Anja Flicker – Director Würzburg Public Library
2/31

2. Background Anja Flicker

I am a graduate librarian and started my working life in 1993 at Munich Public Library (Bavaria, Germany). I had a great time there and learned a lot.

Anyway: In 2001 I left the public sector to become head of knowledge management at the financial services provider LHI Leasing GmbH (Munich, Germany). During my time there as head of knowledge management, the enterprise was chosen by Financial Times Germany, the business magazine Impulse and the Commerzbank to be **"Knowledge Manager of the Year"** (2003)!

In 2005, I moved to reinisch AG (Karlsruhe, Germany). For almost 5 years, I was responsible there for conception, realisation and ongoing development of Knowledge and Intellectual Capital Management. ICM is the analysis, control and development of the intellectual = human, structural and relational / social capital.

In these years I grew into a community of practice of German and international KM- and ICM-experts.

So I'm happy and proud to be a **funding member of New Club of Paris** (NCoP; The New Club of Paris is the agenda developer for the knowledge economy. The Club's main objective is to create awareness on what the knowledge society is and will be, and also support nations, regions, cities, communities, organisations and companies in their transformation into the Knowledge Economy)

and **member of the advisory board of the German Society for Knowledge management (GfWM)**.

This is very valuable "relational capital" for me and my library!



Now, having expanded my personal human and relational capital, I came back to the roots:

Since January 2010 I am director of the public library Würzburg.

Here I use my competences and experience to establish and apply the principles and methods of knowledge management and intellectual capital management – I'm proud I can say that we in Würzburg are among the first KM-movers in German public libraries.

Würzburg is a town with appr. 135.000 inhabitants, we have a big university with 30.000 students;

in my library there work 45 employees, we have 200.000 media items, our collection reaches 1.200.000 loans per year, 2000 customers visit us per day.

[Fotos: (c) Congress-Tourismus-Wirtschaft Würzburg, Fotograf: A. Bestle]



3. Why KM in libraries

Ladies and Gentlemen: Who of you applies KM?

Please turn to your neighbour now, introduce yourself with 2-3 tags that characterise you and then tell him/her in 60 seconds, why you use KM!

We are the KM-Section of IFLA here today. I don't have to tell you, what you gain by KM or why you should apply it.

That you will increase quality, improve transparency as well as access to information and knowledge, that you will reduce failure rate and achieve more outputs equally valuable.

What I *can* and want to tell you, though, after working 9 years "for the economy" / in SMEs: We librarians are predestined for doing KM.

Because we *can* do it: KM is very near to our core competences. And because we *believe in it* without counting every hour or € / \$ we have to invest: In the public sector I met a lot of people whom I didn't have to convince of the value of KM, whom I didn't have to convince that there is more to the iceberg (= employee) than you can see, that there is hidden knowledge worth diving for – that's agreed upon, you don't have to argue.

In the private sector – by the end of the day – managers want to count the output in € / \$.

Who of you told his/her neighbour earlier that he/she does it for money?



I can tell you why I do it:

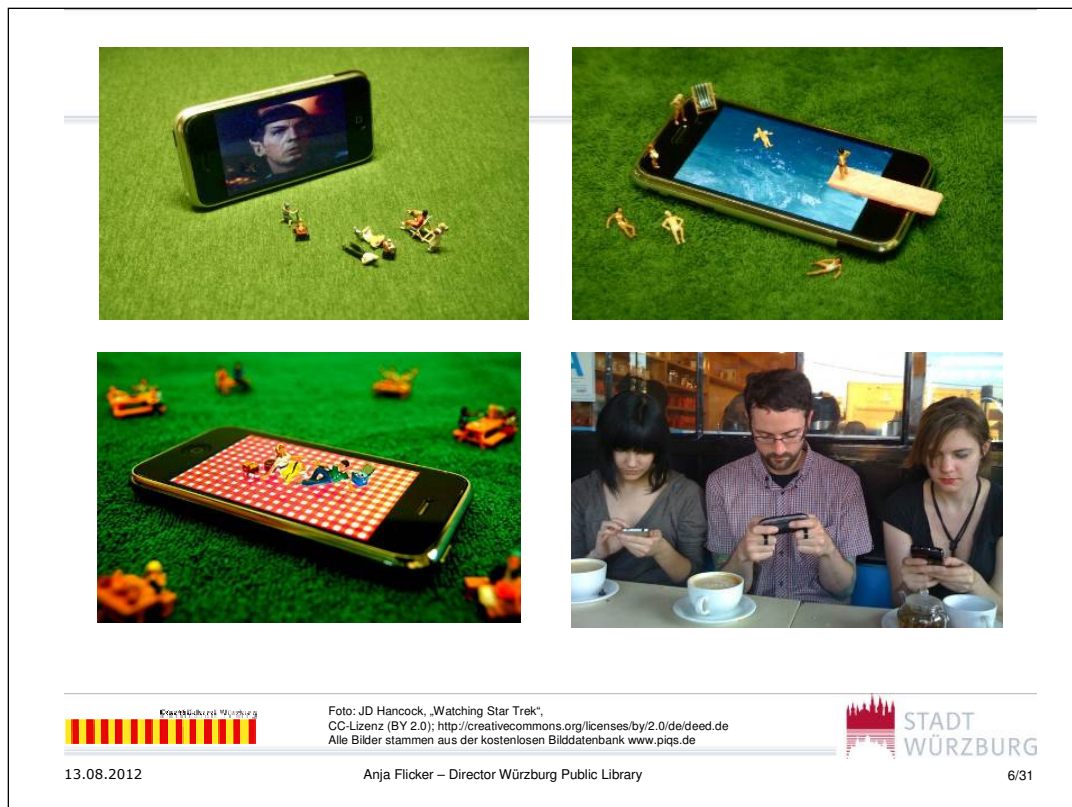
I want my employees to form a happy and healthy team, working and learning together.

I want us to perform professionally as an efficient and healthy organisation.

And I want to produce the best service every day for happy and satisfied customers.

How – without KM – would I cope with this daily challenge?

[Fotos: Stephanie Hofschlaeger / Karl-Heinz Laube; Quelle: pixelio.de; Katharina Trutzl]



And how – without KM – could we cope with the challenges *of the future*?

How for example could we keep up with the cultural and technological developments of the “digital world”?

If libraries and librarians want to stay what they say they are – media- and information-experts – we need to be familiar with all these technologies our customers are confronted with and use in their daily lives: mobile devices like Smartphones and e-readers, web 2.0 and applications with “web 2.0-character”, social networks. We need the expertise to use these technologies, we need to apply them and integrate them in our library services, we need to know how to handle them so well as to be able to consult and train our customers. And we need to constantly stay up to date in this fast changing world!

But we're not done with learning about the technologies: We need to accept the cultural change that came with “web 2.0” (contribution and networking, sharing of content and knowledge, et cetera), realise that this won't go away any more – and so build, constantly develop and live the library as part of this modern society.

Look at these pictures: They use the modern devices as information channels and for media consumption,

they use them for leisure activities (gaming, reading ...),

they use them to support their daily live (what's around me? next bus...)

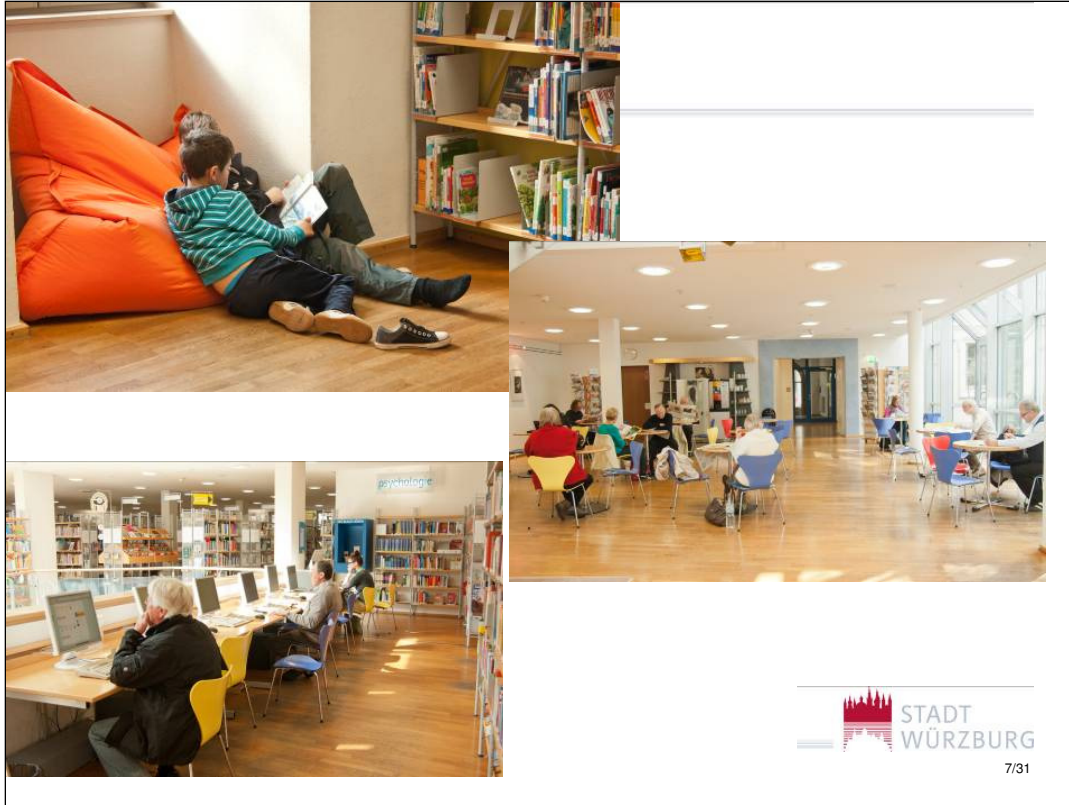
And they want to have coffee and company!

I want to say it again: We must live the library as part of *this* modern society!

[Fotos: JD Hancock, „Watching Star Trek“, JD Hancock, „Swimming In The iPool“, JD Hancock, „iPicnic“, Karen, „Ya Internet“,

CC-Lizenz (BY 2.0); <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/de/deed.de>

Alle Bilder stammen aus der kostenlosen Bilddatenbank www.piqs.de]

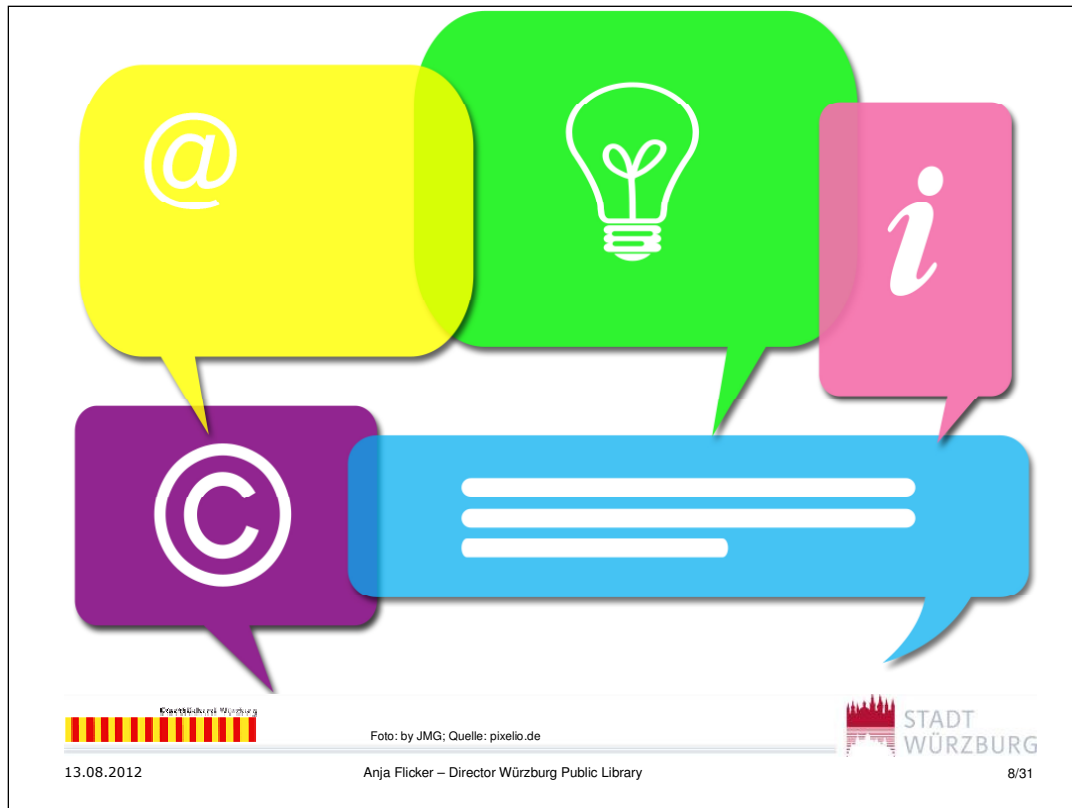


I want to make clear, though: A library should still offer the “traditional” services! It will still be a place to get access to books (+ other media and information) a place to read, to meet and communicate, to learn and be trained in reading and information skills, a place for people of all age and with a vast variety of interests.

The mission for future librarians will be to combine tradition and innovation. A complex job for smart and engaged professionals!

How – without KM – could we succeed here?

[Fotos: Katharina Trutzl]



4. Daily KM-practice ant Public Library Würzburg (1):

What we do and how KM adds value Now down to today's daily practice: I want to outline the most important KM-methods we apply and what we (intend to) gain from them.

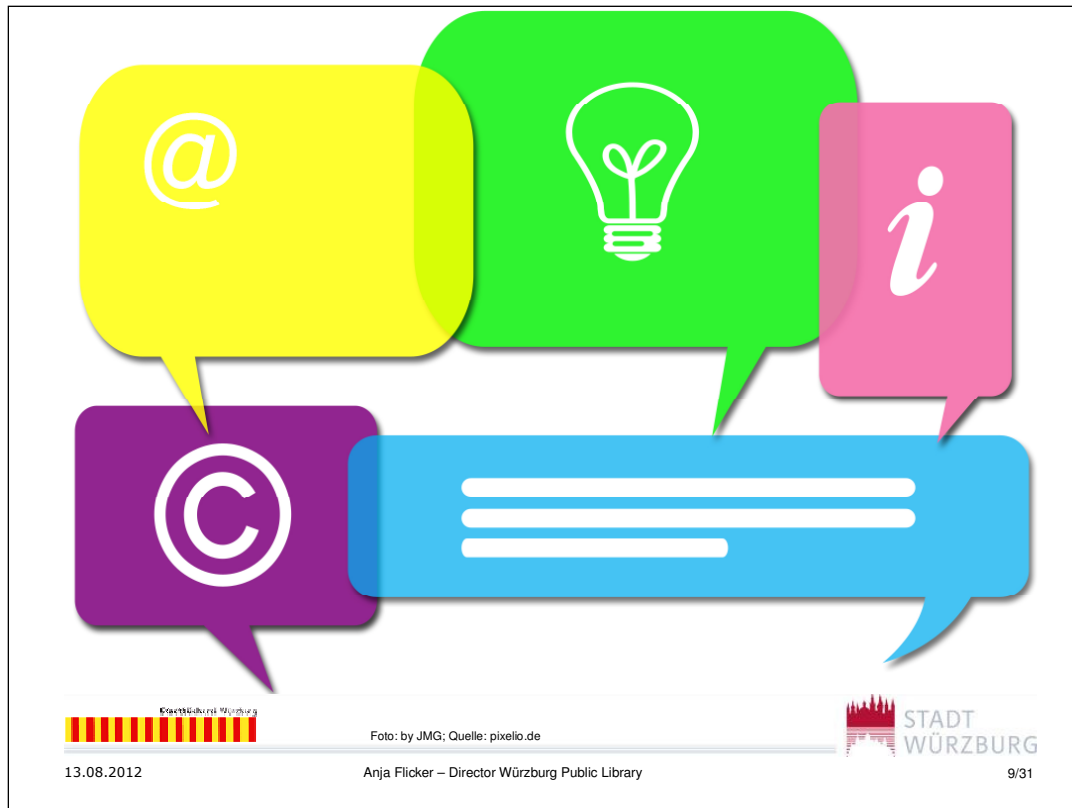
Let me include at this point a few words about the definition of "knowledge" and "information": The president of German Society of KM, Dr. Ulrich Schmidt, uses to say "knowledge is between the ears"! As soon as you explicit it – communicate or document it – it's information; Now that we agree on this, I will nevertheless use the term "knowledge" even if it strictly spoken would be information – sometimes the word sounds sexier... ;-)]

My role today is to speak to you as a practitioner. So let me break down the different KM-models and theories to a very hands-on practical version of three points + one: In my team, we apply a combination of methods for

- 1) communication of knowledge
- 2) documentation of information and
- 3) reflexion of experiences in order to learn. (I will come to point 4 later.)

1) Communication of knowledge:

- 1a) **We hold transparent team meetings weekly:** One representative of every unit tells the colleagues what was important during the last week, which tasks have to be fulfilled, what's of interest or occupying the unit this week, which problems or subjects are discussed these days. → The whole team gains transparency – insight in the other units brings an increase of understanding, respect and mutual help, problems can be solved commonly etc. I also intend to make hidden experts visible, bring knowledge into a flow.
- 1b) **We conduct (moderated and documented) face-to-face knowledge transfer:** If, for example, someone leaves or joins the team, or if tasks are newly organised and someone has to be introduced – If ever possible, the experienced expert is supposed to talk the rookie into his/her new job. Dave Snowden says "I know more than I can tell and I can tell more than I can write down". That is why I want my employees not only to document tasks and processes, but to show and explain face to face. It can be helpful, to support this conversation by a moderator who will help them stay focused on the subject ;-), ask further questions and document the essentials (in our wiki).
- 1c) Those colleagues who are responsible for a branch library form a **Community of Practice (CoP)**. Driven by a common motivation – wanting the best for their branch – these experts meet regularly to discuss daily operational problems. They also have my order to think strategically: What have branch libraries to look like in the future? → We gain synergies, professionalism and efficiency if experts elaborate things together instead of alone! That leads to more quality in the customer services. For the colleagues it's an opportunity to learn together, develop their personality and expertise. And it's more fun ☺ **Remember? I want them to be happy!**

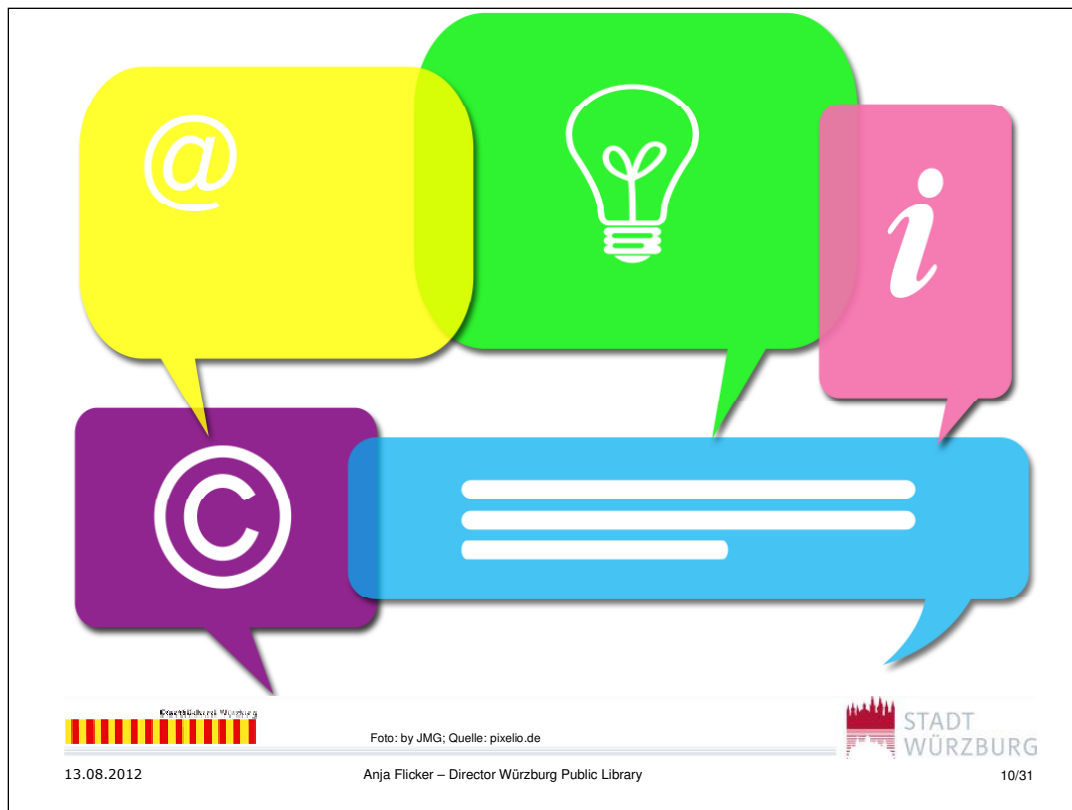


4. Daily KM-practice ant Public Library Würzburg (2):

2) Documentation of information:

2a) When I started as new Director at Würzburg Public Library 2,5 years ago, I interviewed every single team member to work out their individual **Expert-profile** with them. In a mindmap I document the employee's learning and working history as well as the actual tasks and responsibilities. I summarize the competences, experiences and fields of expertise and knowledge. We also put down the sources of information and the professional network and relations. Thus, I gain a transparent overview on every employee. Important note: I only write down what they agree upon. They only have to say as much as they want! Personnel board is informed, privacy protection is preserved! The expert-profiles are very important and valuable instruments for my every day Human Resources Management. On this basis I plan knowledge transfers, I organise tasks and units, I decide on organisational development as well as on personal development of employees.

2b) We set up a **wiki** about one year ago – and I love it ☺ ! The wiki became our common information platform in which we can write down, search for and find everything we need or want to know or tell. You know the wiki-principles: common content, no hierarchies or publishing workflows, no copyright on texts – Here some tricks and success factors for organisational wikis: We planned it carefully supported by a experienced member of my KM-network ;-), we elaborated it with a pilot team before letting the whole team go for it. And we announced wiki-gardeners to have a closer look on structure and content, to do some weeding if necessary, to nourish new content, to groom and nurse here and there. They make the difference! Gain: "Information at our fingertips"! Much less searching for, much more finding of information. And that is directly noticeable by the customers at the information desks.



4. Daily KM-practice ant Public Library Würzburg (3):

3) Reflection: A learning organisation needs to reflect regularly. It should become aware of experiences and learnings to be able to use these to adjust future behaviour. We conduct structured **project reviews**. *Everyone* who was involved takes part to reflect the project from every perspective. We talk about goals, activities, failures and successes, personal emotional ups and downs. Finally, the team summarises the learnings and expresses conclusions to be put into action in the next project to come. Outcomes: Increase of professionalism and efficiency lead to more quality in our projects and the customer services (again); we also avoid repeating mistakes but are assuring to repeat successful strategies. Finally, 1-3 are methods to improve team and organisation. The *motivation* to invest all these internal efforts, though, is to improve our services. **Remember? I want happy and satisfied customers! ☺**

But there is one more thing, another method we apply.

4) It's about strategy and the management of our intellectual capital (IC): We elaborate an **Intellectual Capital Report** – in Germany it's called **Wissensbilanz** – using the method "Wissensbilanz – made in Germany". The project team is set together with representatives of *all* units, hierarchies and groups we have in the library. Every employee should have someone in the "Wissensbilanz-team" who speaks for him/her. Why? For the tasks to do we need all the different perspectives – not only those of the management or the librarians. Together we discuss our mission and vision and define our goals. In a next step, we analyse the library's intellectual capital (I will go into some more details in a minute.). And we evaluate every single element of our IC. Important: We evaluate *not* in relation to today's daily work, but in relation to our vision and goals!!

Here is our vision: > We belong to the best libraries in Germany > Our customer-oriented, efficient, professional and innovative work is exemplary. > To serve our customers with excellent products is our first priority. > We are among the first movers in taking up innovations. > We have pioneering spirit. > We act as a team and are a learning organisation.



5. KM embedded in Intellectual Capital Management (ICM)

Based on this evaluation and related to this vision, we design the strategic development of our IC. Our KM-activities are *part of* this development.

So I define ICM as superstructure of KM. This method helps me to embed KM into strategy – thus think it bigger, broader and deeper.

Ladies and Gentlemen: I want you to think about this for a minute:

What is the Intellectual Capital of your library? Is it all in Knowledge = between the ears of your employees?

Or are there more things essential for your success? Do you really see everything? Do you really know all the hidden potentials?

If you apply KM, you deal with only *one of three* elements of the Intellectual Capital of your library. There can be more to it than managing knowledge and information within the boundaries of your organisation: A more holistic approach is the management of the Intellectual Capital of your library. And to go even further, to make your library a success factor of the Intellectual Capital of your city.

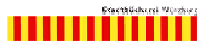


Foto: www.viajar24h.com, „Ritual www.viajar24h.com-30“;
CC-Lizenz (BY 2.0); <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/de/deed.de>
Alle Bilder stammen aus der kostenlosen Bilddatenbank www.piqs.de



13.08.2012

Anja Flicker – Director Würzburg Public Library

12/31

The elements of Intellectual Capital we analyse and then develop, are:

1) Employees – the Wissensbilanz-experts call this element “human capital”, I prefer to talk about employees:

their knowledge, skills, attitudes, motivation – everything they have between their ears, in their hands and hearts



The elements of Intellectual Capital we analyse and then develop, are:

2) Structural Capital: infrastructure that supports our work, methods and tools for communication, for sharing and documentation of knowledge and information, innovation, organisational processes, culture

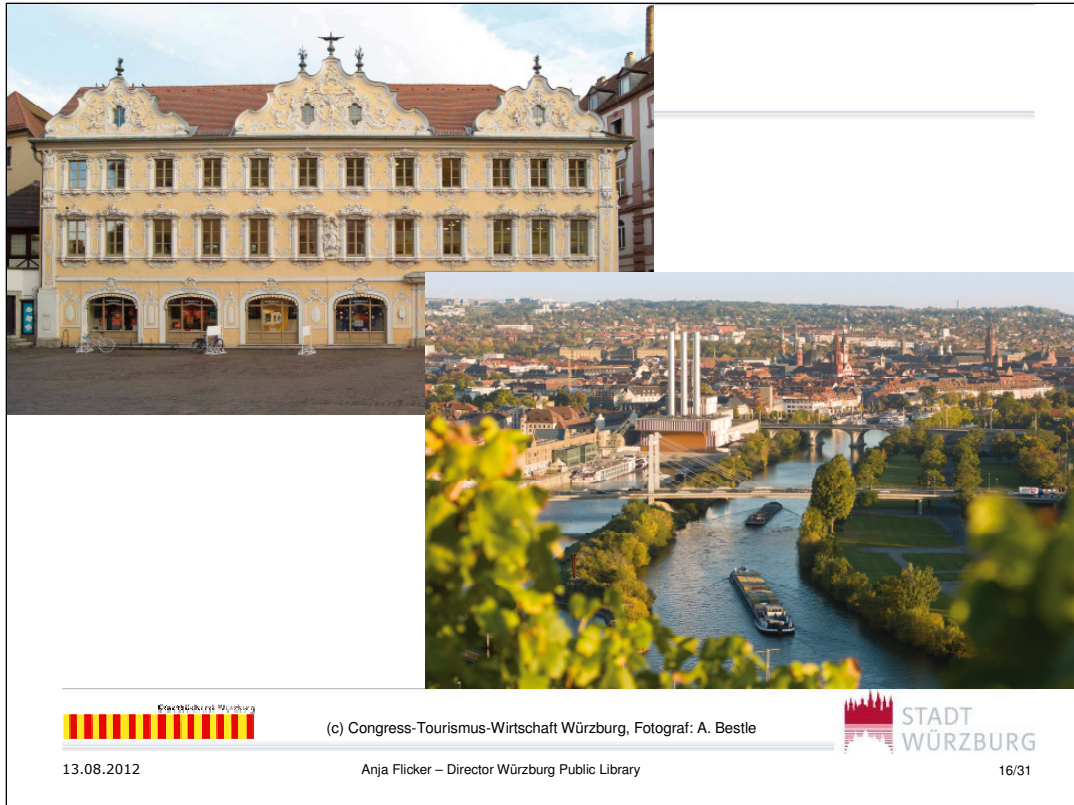


The elements of Intellectual Capital we analyse and then develop, are:

3) Relational Capital: to customers, to suppliers and partners, public relations, relationships with city council and investors, ways of integrating external knowledge

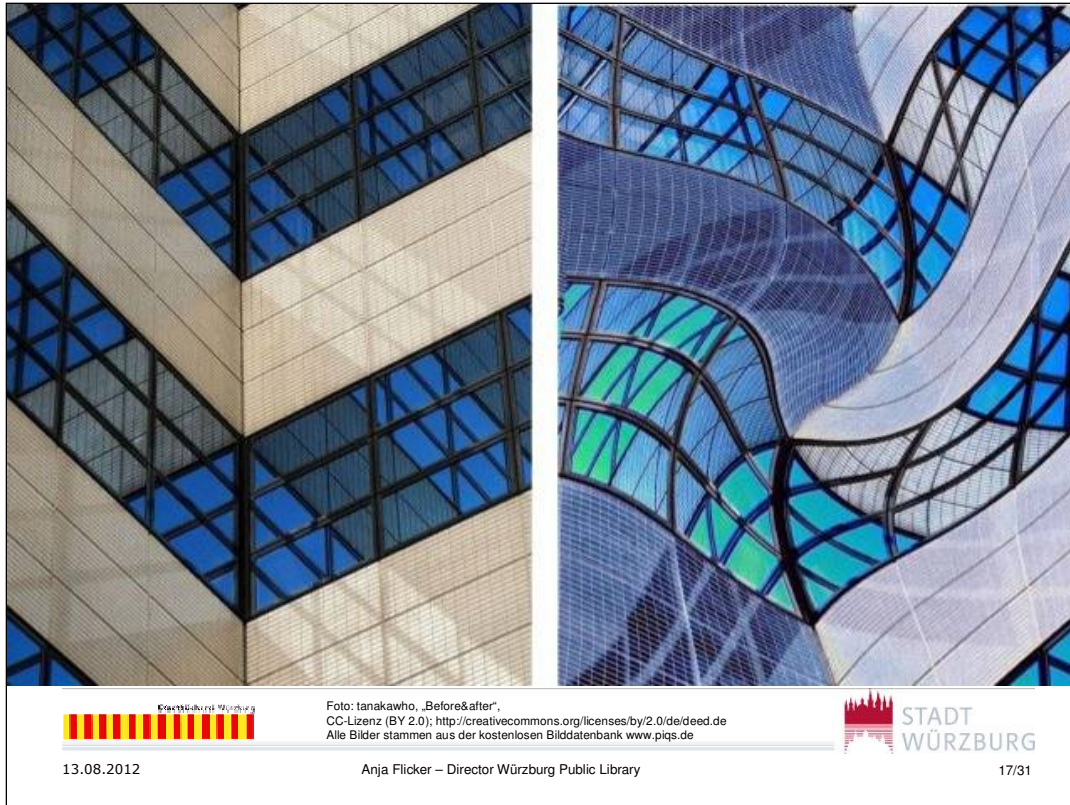


**I ask again: What are the most important intangibles of your library?
Can you see them all? How good do you know them? How much time /
money / attention do you invest to develop and sustain them?**



Now let us think one step further:

Can you see your library as part of the communal system? What if you design your products and services for citizens – not only customers? How can we position our library as part of the city's structural and relational capital? My vision is that our future lays there!



6. Challenges and outlook

Public Libraries as structural capital success factors can be THE bearers of innovation within a city – for the city council and urban administration as well as for the citizens. Libraries can act as prototypes: First movers who try out new technologies, methods and tools.

Who else should play this role without commercial, political or any other tendencial motivation?!

Let the others watch you innovating: you'll see, they will want it, too (e. g. the Würzburg administration asks for a wiki or a smooth method for expert-debriefing). They will be impressed of the their (!) library as information- and media-specialist, always up to date and ahead.

What do we librarians need for this vision to come true?

→ Courage!

... to change – our role, our attitude, our habits, our house

... to try something new that could fail (fail and learn is a major principle of KM, so don't be afraid of it ;-)

... to share knowledge with the customers and develop things together; accept that collective intelligence / the knowledge of the crowd is bigger than one's personal knowledge (tomorrow's KM is more about "commons" than about "I tell you")

... finally courage to "stand up and speak for your library and your goals" (Claudia Lux)



13.08.2012

Foto: gerd, „Durch Starten“,
CC-Lizenz (BY 2.0); <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/de/deed.de>
Alle Bilder stammen aus der kostenlosen Bilddatenbank www.piqs.de

STADT
WÜRZBURG

Anja Flicker – Director Würzburg Public Library

18/31

Let us just do it: get started!

To strengthen your courage, let me end my keynote with a citation of the German poet Hilde Domin: **“I Set My Foot in the Air and It Carried Me”**

Look at her: She died at the age of 96 – the air carried her a long way ☺

So: let's not be afraid to set our feet in the air!

Thank you for listening and Happy Future!

Thanks for listening!
What do *you* think?

Anja Flicker
Stadtbücherei Würzburg (Max-Heim-Bücherei)
Marktplatz 9 | 97070 Würzburg
Tel.: 0931 37 22 97
anja.flicker@stadt.wuerzburg.de



13.08.2012

Anja Flicker – Director Würzburg Public Library



19/31