



What's new at Readers Services

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Asbestos – What Happens Now?

Recently, we informed you about the asbestos found in the dust samples in the stacks of our Library at Potsdamer Straße. Today, we would like to explain to you the further steps we are taking.

Asbestos contamination

First of all, we want to point out clearly that the asbestos found in our stacks does not contaminate the breathable air, according to independent experts. The quality of the air is regularly tested and monitored. The closing of the concerned areas is only a precautionary measure. Please be assured that there is no health hazard by using the Library or its holdings.

Time schedule

According to the original plans, the floors of stacks involved were to be renovated successively until autumn 2011. This would have included the closing of partial areas of the collections for about eight weeks respectively – as already done in the past months. The preventive closure of floors six to nine of the stacks gives us the opportunity to finish the disposal of asbestos in those stacks in a compact and time-saving way. Almost two million items, mainly new books and periodicals, are involved. The still outstanding cleaning of the inserted ceilings and the renewal of the lighting system in the stacks can thus be combined with the cleaning of shelves and holdings on the barred floors and will be completed by November this year. However, by August 2010, the southern part of the stacks with the larger portion of items should be ready again for use.

Renovations also in the reading room

At the same time, the air conditioning – and asbestos cleansing and renovation will be continued in other areas of the building as scheduled. From Monday, 22 February, the northern sector of the reading room, in particular the internet stations for users and workplaces of the Reference Library 8 (Social and Political Sciences) on the third floor are involved. Some internet stations cannot be used until the middle of April. In April, scaffolding and protective barriers will be put around the complete window façade in this area. This separation serves only as noise protection. The actual construction work will be executed in the gap between the façade layers. A dust nuisance is not to be expected. We regret that there will be no daylight in this area of the reading room during this construction stage. The erection of scaffolding and all connected works will take place at night or on the weekends. The completion of these measures is scheduled for the end of October 2010.

Gestures of goodwill

We are very aware that the closure of these substantial holding segments over several months is really annoying. Please ask for some help at the Information Desks in order to minimise the inconvenience caused to you. We will try to locate the needed volumes in other libraries and make interlibrary loan requests, if necessary. Please also contact our staff at the Lending Desks to find out more about our package of goodwill measures. For example, the validity of one-month library cards will be extended to 2 months, the 12-month library cards will be extended to 18 months. This applies to all library cards already paid and those to be purchased as long as the stacks are closed. In addition, we plan to deposit new acquisitions in a special area on the ground floor starting at the end of February 2010 in order to make them available to all users, as unfortunately, the stacks for new acquisitions are also affected by the above closure.

We will do our best to support all our users in their research despite the present, extremely difficult situation in our Library at Potsdamer Straße.

Thank you for your understanding!

Dr. Daniela Lülfig
Head of the Readers Services Department
and Head of Building Department