

THE JOURNEY ABROAD WITH A SUITCASE OF BOOKS

Prof. Kai Ambos is establishing an International Criminal Law library

Prof. Ambos has within only 3 years assembled 5200 books from all over the world. The jurist has built up the library specialized in Foreign and International Criminal Law and Criminal Procedure at the Law Faculty of the University of Göttingen predominantly from donations of legal works. This was not done out of pomposity but solely for usage, research and education purposes, which were established shortly after the creation of the University of Göttingen in 1737. Grateful graduates donated exhibits. Furthermore, Göttinger academics used their contacts in the world's scientific community in order to compile teaching and research objects – a principle which functions till date. The library specialized in Foreign and International Criminal Law and Criminal Procedure of the Göttingen University, which Prof. Kai Ambos has established contains over 5200 volumes.

A majority of the books and magazines inventory consists of “donations”. After the researcher's request for support in setting up the library, particularly colleagues from Latin America and also researchers and publishing houses from European countries provided publications for this purpose. Ambos: “in the meantime we dispose of an inventory which is in this form unique among Law Faculties in Germany.

The start of the appeal for support

The scholarly literature collected by Ambos forms a section of the Law Faculty's library. For this purpose, the books available were sorted out and joined in a new system containing the criminal Law and criminal procedure of individual countries as well as international criminal Law.

Parallel to it, Ambos started his appeal for support, which brought an “unexpected high response rate” in its first attempt. Book consignments came in from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Italy, Colombia, Mexico, Austria, Peru, Portugal, Sweden, Spain, Switzerland and Turkey. They compliment the works, which were procured through his appointment in 2003.

In a second action, Ambos requested scholarly literature in criminal Law from France as well as the Common-Law-Countries: Australia, Great Britain, Canada and the USA. Meanwhile, many colleagues provide their new editions or current publications to the library and they receive scholarly literature from Göttingen in return. Ambos points out that “this exchange functions basically over personal contacts”. Ambos could particularly mobilise contact persons in Latin America.

He always has his suitcase of books when he travels abroad for research. In order to get more literature, he often has to visit second hand book shops. He further points out that “one would not get on this region with online orders”. Students have also, in the meantime, made the equipment of the library with literature their issue. For instance, a Mexican student brought along books from Mexico and a prosecutor from Hanover arranged for literature to come from Sweden.

Meanwhile the inventory is so enriched with scientific publications that it is also being used by researchers and students from abroad. A working room has been setup for them. “We thereby meet our faculty's concerns vis-à-vis its international orientation”. The researcher is presently working on raising third-party funds in order to secure the continued development of the library. He thereby still closely cooperates with the Library of the Law Faculty and the Lower Saxony State and University library.

“A time-consuming project”

This “exceptional and time-consuming project” would not have been carried out without the support of library staff. They gladly give a helping hand. The librarian Winfried Schirmer believes that all that has been able to be realised in this short period of time is simply “remarkable”. There is still enough space in the basement but Schirmer thinks they would soon have to move.

Ambos studied Law and Political Sciences in Freiburg, Oxford and Munich. He took over the chair for Criminal Law, Criminal Procedure, Comparative Law and International Criminal Law at the Georg-August University in 2003. The book inventory has since then constantly been increasing.