



### Focus on . . . Austria

## A Viewpoint on the Medical Information Infrastructure in Austria

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Though Austria has a famous library tradition documented by its many monastery-libraries, along with a well developed library infrastructure (<http://info.uibk.ac.at/c108/obib.html#w>) with many modern libraries and a modern electronic infrastructure (<http://www.bibvb.ac.at/verbund-opac.htm>), it must be said that the medical information infrastructure as a whole cannot be compared to that which may be found in the Anglo-American or Scandinavian framework. In addition, in a small country with single funding resources mostly from the state and/or regional federal boards, highly regulated market traditional requirements for developing a proactive and dynamic information infrastructure in money-intense specialities are far from ideal. Most of these rely on medical and clinical research too. This must be considered when making a report of the Austrian library setting within the medical library infrastructure. While H.Leitner in this issue deals with the newly founded Central Medical Library attached to the Vienna University General Hospital, this article will try to give some additional information on the medical information environment throughout Austria. With the initiation of a new information era, facilitated by the growing mass of computer networks, the term information environment is probably more appropriate than the term library environment to describe the domain of universities facilities, though libraries still play an important role.

### Principal Medical Libraries in Austria

Apart from the Library of the General Hospital of Vienna (see article of H.Leitner) defined as the Central Medical Library of Austria, there are currently four other main medical libraries in Austria. Three of these are attached to the medical faculties of Graz (<http://www-ub.kfunigraz.ac.at/>), Innsbruck (<http://info.uibk.ac.at/c108/>) and to the Veterinary University in

Vienna (<http://www.vu-wien.ac.at/bibl/biblhome.htm>) [1], while the fourth is the library of the Society of Physicians in Vienna (<http://www.billrothhaus.at>).

### Graz

Though the eminent achievements of the University of Graz's (Styria) Medical Faculty and the sophisticated university library infrastructure are evident, they are still waiting for their new library. After 143 years the new Medical Library is under construction and will be opened by 2003, supplemented by a preclinical library in 2002. Within the planned center of medical research, the library and a student learning center will form a functional unit with about 1000 sqm for each. The library will have storage for 250.000 volumes of which 100.000 are planned to be on public access while the remainder, due to reduced storage capacity after more ambitious plans earlier, will now be stored on compact shelves. Today the main university library serves as a central acquisition and cataloguing facility delivering books and journals to about 40 remote institutes and clinics. Despite this situation and the more or less complete lack of librarians, journals are not bound and therefore easily lost without trace to many places. The main library also maintains a CD-ROM network connected to the central medical library in Vienna. The third Austrian medical faculty belongs to the University of Innsbruck (Tyrol) that has had a biomedical branch library since 1978 mostly related to theoretical medical research literature. Being the first specialized medical library in Austria it is organized as self-service comprising about 1100 journals selected according to the ISI Impact Factors. Since its founding it has been expanded three times and today it comprises a student learning center and open shelves for another 30.000 volumes. Nowadays its user community is represented by 60% students and 40% professors, lecturers and clinical staff. It is also connected to the CD-ROM network of the central medical library in Vienna for the use of Medline and PascalBiomed. Both of the

above mentioned libraries are engaged in the newly founded library consortia negotiating for cheaper and better journal acquisitions as well as access to electronic journals. Their holdings are included in the Austrian Library network and accessible by OPAC and a webinterface worldwide. The Library of the Society of Physicians of Vienna is in many respects outstanding. Though today it is supported solely by governmental funds, it is by its history and organization, independent, with a valuable stock of many medical journals and a few books. Originally its principal users were the members of the medical society, the physicians, professors and lecturers in Viennese medicine where they held meetings and maintained a CME-center for more than hundred years. Thus the library was founded for its members offering them prompt and easy access to the medical clinical literature during times where access to this special material was not available in the university environment or scattered in many remote locations. On account of this eminent and long-standing effort – comparable to the history of the National Library of Medicine, USA, - this library holds many historical journals from the very beginning of systematic clinical publishing in the last century. It offers the opportunity not only to access current information but also historical items especially in times when it has become commonplace to copy original descriptions of pathological or therapeutical issues thus transferring old errors through many years. The storerooms of the Society library thus offer specialists with professional knowledge and detective instincts superb possibilities to solve most of such erroneous citations. In addition to the possibility that Umberto Eco might have found some input for his well known novel here, I would further recommend to those visiting Vienna to take a look at the wonderful architecture at Frankgasse 8. In the latter years the Library has undertaken solid efforts to serve its members through sophisticated technology offering web-access to Medline, copying-services and virtual



## Focus on . . . Austria

access to CME-events. Over and above serving its members it also provides a considerable user base comprising physicians and professional societies in Austria including research institutes and pharmaceutical companies. Not only topographically close but also organizationally it is today linked through several agreements to the Central Medical Library of Vienna. At this point it is worth mentioning that though Salzburg does not have a medical faculty it has a biological faculty and library and recently there have been some moves to set up a fourth medical faculty.

### Medical information resources at hospitals

The hospital infrastructure of Austria (<http://www.bmsgsgv.at>) comprises 325 hospitals consisting of 73.000 beds with 14.000 physicians, 33.000 nurses, 8.000 medical-technical staff and 19.000 sanitary staff serving about 1.6 million people a year. Of these hospitals 70% have less than 200 beds, 35% less than 100 beds. It is well known that nowadays most hospitals rely on public access to Medline (i.e. PubMed) and other sources available from the internet. The majority of hospital departments purchase and manage their own journal collections lacking central cataloguing or management facilities, though in most cases there are budget allocations for medical literature. Depending on the approach and disposition of their Heads of Department and the storage space given by hospitals funds, a considerable percentage of journal or database access is provided through services offered by pharmaceutical or medical equipment companies and their sales forces. There appears to be no strategic plan regulating such issues in the majority of hospitals. From a professional point of view it is also strange that only a few pharmaceutical companies have solid library and medical information infrastructures in Austria. Due to the small market few companies have research and/or production units here and rely heavily on their headquarters. One of the

better known facilities was the SANDOZ library attached to an important research institute which today has become part of Novartis. Of the few pharmaceutical research companies most have some sophisticated pharmaceutical/medical information infrastructure: These comprise companies like Immuno, today a Baxter subsidiary, the former Chemie Linz, today part of Nycomed, Kundl and Gebro-Fieberbrunn both part of Novartis and some further subsidiaries of major players in the pharmaceutical world.

### Institutes with specialities related to the medical field

There are a few federal institutions that are affiliated to authorities such as the Ministry of Health and the Federal Institute of Health comparable in its duties to the NIH, USA, and also drug approval authorities, food and market authorities, water authorities etc. The advent of the access of remote-databases (later called online) in the late 70s to 80s in Austria brought in a few people in the medical community to the Bundesinstitut fuer Gesundheitswesen and a few other institutions thereby establishing the online scene and initiating meetings at the newly founded Austrian Online User Group (AOLUG). Since my personal entrance into the medical library field I remember at that time only a few professionally trained librarians in the Austrian medical field namely the bibliographer Dr. Rupert Hink and his counterpart the dentist and theologian Dr. Bosmans, the physician Dr. Robert Csepan, the librarian of the neurological institute Mag. Schlögl and the retired Dr. Trandjiski of the Society of Physicians in Vienna-Library. In addition there were of course the librarians in charge of medical literature in the University Libraries of Vienna, Graz and Innsbruck and the Veterinary University in Vienna. With the advent of medical libraries after 1978 a small group of people formed in Innsbruck a group that could be classed as medical librarians. Most of them meet at the meetings of the Austrian Online User Group

(AOLUG) or through the Austrian Documentation Society. Some of them also take part in the German Medical Library Association (AGMB) or the German Documentation Society (DGD/DGI) which now is also taking steps towards participation in EAHIL. Interestingly the rise of internet-technology facilitated also some medical initiatives in the form of medical ISPs. Of these MedicalNet (<http://www.medicalnet.at>) and Med.at (<http://www.med.at>) are competing with medical professionals. Apart from the Austrian Scientific Libraries-OPAC there still is no Austrian Database specifically related to the medical field

### Medical Journals in Austria

There are at least two clinical journals which are renowned for historical and local reasons namely the Wiener Klinische Wochenschrift today published by Springer-Wien (17 journals in total and some 130 books/year) and the Wiener Medizinische Wochenschrift published by Blackwell. These journals which both go back to the 19th century still represent the backbone of clinical journals though in many respects they have lost their international reputation (represented by few impact points on the Impact Factor) but they still retain their national importance. Nonetheless there are many medical journals serving the local medical community for information dissemination. Some of these can be found on their publisher's websites such as <http://www.springer.at/>, <http://www.universimed.at> or Krause & Pachernegg [http://www.eunet.net/k\\_u\\_p.htm](http://www.eunet.net/k_u_p.htm) (8 journals)

### Some further Austrian medical journals and newspapers

Mitteilungen der österreichischen Sanitätsverwaltung (Social medicine, Hygiene) Österreichische Apotheker-Zeitung (Pharmacists Association) Österreichische Ärzte-Zeitung (Physicians Association Austria) (circulation 36.000) Forum Dr.med <http://www.fdm.at>



### Focus on . . . Austria

(circulation 22.500) Journal of Clinical and Basic Cardiology [http://members.eunet.at/k\\_u\\_p/cardiol.htm](http://members.eunet.at/k_u_p/cardiol.htm)  
Arzt Praxis (circulation 11.000) ÖKZ Österreichische Krankenhauszeitung (circulation 9.000) Ärzte Magazin: (circulation 16.000) weekly: Ärztewoche <http://www-aerztewoche.co.at> (circulation 16.200) and Medical Tribune (14.200) .

#### Medical book sellers and publishers

There are three to five principal medical book sellers in Austria:  
Wilhelm Maudrich and Facultas that also work as medical publishers (<http://www.maudrich.co.at>),  
Urban & Schwarzenberg a subsidiary of the Munich Publisher.  
Of the more known publishers there is Springer-Wien, Krause & Pachernegg ([http://members.eunet.at/k\\_u\\_p/](http://members.eunet.at/k_u_p/)),  
Universimed (<http://www.universimed.at>),  
Österreichischer Apotheker-Verlag and a few others.

#### Some medically related Internet sources

Apart from those already named there is Austrian Health Net <http://www.ich-net.net> containing a valuable resource on self help groups (SIGIS) "self help group information system".

<http://www.aponet.at> a directory of Austrian pharmacies

<http://www.krankenanstalten.at> a directory of Austrian Hospitals

<http://www.magwien.gv.at> the homepage of the city of Vienna leading to information about the cities health infrastructure

<http://www.forum-ernaehrung.at> an excellent resource on eating and health-related issues

<http://www.akh-wien.ac.at> the site of the General Hospital of Vienna Information on the medical faculties may be found on the universities sites:

<http://www.univie.ac.at>,  
<http://www.kfunigraz.ac.at>,  
<http://www.uibk.ac.at>  
For a web-view on Austrian information infrastructure concerning libraries  
<http://www.ac-info.ac.at/owwbs.html>

#### Annotations:

[1] For information on the veterinary information sources in Austria: Reinitzer, Doris: Veterinary Medical Library Services in Austria. Proceedings 5th ECMHL Health information management: What strategies ? 1996 pp. 111-113  
Reinitzer, Doris: Solving the information needs of veterinarians in Austria. Proceedings of the 6th European Conference of Medical and Health Libraries, Utrecht 22-27 June 1998. pp142-144

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Brandstötter, Elisabeth: INFODOC. Bibliotheken, Informations-und Dokumentationseinrichtungen in Österreich. (Bundesministerium für Wissenschaften u. Forschung) Graz: Neugebauer 1994. ISBN 3-85376-056-2 [This is a more recent directory on Austrian libraries - however not exclusively specialized in medicine]

Gergely, Stefan M: Medizin Wien 1983 (Fachinformationsführer 2) ISBN 3-205-06102-0 267s [This title, however, is rather outdated because it is a compilation of the medical infrastructure of Austria from 1983-]

Reinitzer, Sigrid; Kroller, Franz: Fachbibliotheken für Medizin in:

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Sauper, Bruno: Naturwissenschaftlich-medizinische Literatur und die medizinisch-biologische Fachbibliothek in Innsbruck. in: Die wissenschaftliche Bibliothek. Traditionen, Realitäten, Perspektiven. Festschrift für Oswald Stranzinger zum 65.Geburtstag. Ed. by Heinz Hauffe, Karin heller, Walter Neuhauser. Tyrolia-Verlag Innsbruck-Wien: 1990 (Biblos-Schriften 153): pp.187-202

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