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New perspectives for the Gutenberg Museum since 2010: the Gutenberg Museum in the winds of change

Ladies and Gentlemen, dear participants of the AEPM meeting,

After having introduced you a little bit to our Museum's history, I am going to talk about the current activities and the new perspectives for the Gutenberg-Museum since 2010, when Dr. Annette Ludwig became director of the Gutenberg-Museum.

First of all, however, it should not remain unmentioned that we are all well aware at this Museum that the new plans, projects, and ideas could only be built up on the work which was done by all the directors and staff before. So when I am going to talk about the current wind of change I would also like to do this with all the respect and appreciation for all the people who have helped to create and develop this Museum and have always tried to adapt it to the requirements and challenges of the time: Our past is the basis for our present, and it also determines our future. We must "preserve all tried-and-true things, improve what is good, and have the courage to enter new territory."

Those of you who visited the Gutenberg-Museum some time ago can now realize that much has happened here and that there is a wind of change blowing across it.

And this is exactly what I want to talk about: a museum where the history of printing and the book comes alive, a museum which is making a leap into the 21st century. But I would also like to talk about the fact that today's museums cannot do without any private and corporate sponsors and donors. The Gutenberg Museum is owned by the city of Mainz. We all know that many cities and communities are in financial trouble at the moment. So the Gutenberg-Museum, like many other institutions, would come to a standstill or there would even be a decline in its quality if it did not receive any generous gifts and donations. However, progress is what we urgently need to measure up to the altered expectations of a new generation of visitors.

It seems that we have done a good job so far: the Gutenberg-Museum has recently received a Certificate of Excellence award by TripAdvisor, which is presumably the world's biggest travel website. Our institution received this award, which is "based on millions of reviews and opinions from travelers around the world", for the second year in a row. But we want to get even better, and we have to get better.

So, what is new at the Gutenberg-Museum? Let's have a look !

First of all, we made some changes in the Museum's organisation. There are now an increasing number of events and activities, especially for kids and young people. On Sunday afternoons, the Gutenberg-Museum has longer opening hours. We established the so-called family Sunday with guided tours for kids of different ages and we also regularly offer guided tours for grandparents and grandchildren.

We introduced so-called combi packages for those school groups who want to combine a guided tour with some hands-on experience at the Druckladen, our educational print shop. The combi package has been very successful so far: in 2013, about 300 school groups consisting of almost 6,000 pupils made use of it.

We also had a modern scavenger hunt for young people developed. The participants in this scavenger hunt about Gutenberg and typography are equipped with smartphones, and the questions and tasks are made available by means of QR codes.

Furthermore, we began to cooperate with four other museums here in Mainz, and so we developed together a special project for senior citizens. We created an event which takes place regularly on a Friday afternoon. It consists of a short guided tour and a get-together with coffee and cake.

This year, my colleague Dr. Schneider launched another regular event entitled "Book Consultation". Several times a year, those people who would like to get some more information about their old books are invited to bring them to the Museum. During her book consultation Dr. Schneider answers the visitors' questions and gives them some good pieces of advice.

Another very important point is that we want to open our museum to the twenty-first century; and this opening is meant to cover the presentation of its exhibits and the Museum's content. We want to develop a modern concept of presentation and make increasingly use of new media and technology.

The first little and big steps have already been taken in this direction. In the foyer of the Museum, we've just recently an electronic notice board showing our current calendar of events. And about two years ago, we introduced a new audio guide (in German, English, and French) to our visitors. There are six self-guided audio tours leading through several sections of the Museum. We tried to have the tours developed as lively as possible. Instead of listening to impersonal speakers who read facts as if they were encyclopaedia entries, our visitors can listen to interviews and stories which are told in a lively and personal way. Pictures and background sounds, as "cinema for the ear", make the audio tours a true multi-media experience.

Sometime later, our audio tours were also available on a newly developed app, which was the first museum app here in Mainz. In addition to the audio tours, our museum app offers some useful information, such as interactive floor plans. (The app is available at a price of Euro 3.50 at the Apple AppStore). [So far it is only available in German; but we aim to produce an English version in the future].

We also began to cooperate with the Mainz University of Applied Sciences in the field of media and communications design. So the presentation of typography has become a new principal topic which has already been dealt with in several temporary exhibitions. The cooperation with the Mainz University of Applied Sciences has proved to be very fruitful and this also in the sense of a modern presentation of these exhibitions.

As an example, I would like to take the media exhibition entitled "Moving Types – Letters in Motion", which was shown at the Gutenberg-Museum from October 2011 until August 2012. The aforesaid exhibition was planned, designed, and realized by the Centre for Time-based Design, which comprises the Institute of Media Design of the Mainz University of Applied Sciences and the Schwäbisch Gmünd University of Applied Sciences, and it was organized in co-operation with our Museum. The daily newspaper of the city of Mainz (entitled Allgemeine Zeitung") praised the exhibition stating: "It has catapulted the Gutenberg-Museum into the 21st century". At the Moving Types exhibition, we presented more than 100 years of typography in motion by showing internationally important filmic examples from

the beginnings of the film until today. The centerpiece of the exhibition was a “Media Lounge”, where innumerable pieces of information seemed to float on about 300 little light cubes. The cubes were equipped with QR codes. The visitors of the exhibition could scan the QR codes and then watch the corresponding “filmic exhibits” of typography in motion by means of iPads which had been put at their disposal: there were, among other things, title sequences, commercials, excerpts from children’s films, and music videos.

The exhibition “Moving Types – Letters in Motion” also eliminated the boundaries that are usually set by the rooms of a museum. So “Moving Types” also presented itself to the public with a media façade on the outside of the exhibition building. The media façade, individually made for this event, could be considered as a part of the exhibition. Pedestrians, visitors, and “participants” from all around the world could send their individual text messages via SMS which were then presented on the media façade. So people created their own letters in motion and made many hundreds of LEDs “dance”. In Mainz, this was something completely new. By the way, the media façade is now in permanent use.

“Moving Types” was very successful and received several awards such as the “red dot design award” in 2012. In addition to that, it was nominated for the 2014 German Design Award. After its presentation in Mainz the Moving Types exhibition moved to other cities.

Two other exhibitions were realized in collaboration with the Mainz University of Applied Sciences. So we showed an exhibition entitled “ON-TYPE: Texts on Typography” from November 2011 until May 2012. (222 German-language theses, manifestos, and opinions about the role of typography in the 20th and 21st centuries were presented in a reading lounge. The texts were complemented with interactive elements. The exhibition, which also received several awards, was accompanied by a rich programme of events.

“Call for Type – New Typefaces”, which was our exhibition highlight of 2013, also dealt with typography. This exhibition gave an insight into the fascinating world of type design by presenting, in words and pictures, a compilation of current ideas of typography in the context of its time. The exhibition featured a number of eye-catching typefaces which were presented together with the individual statements of (young) type designers. So the exhibition shed light on different opinions but showed at the same time the characteristic trends in the field of type design.

There’s another project, which was developed as a cooperative research project between the Gutenberg-Museum and the Mainz University of Applied Sciences: a multi-touch table. Recently the Gutenberg-Museum presented this interdisciplinary research project entitled “hands on – B42-Bible” to several journalists and media representatives. On this occasion the invited guests had for the first time the opportunity of using the prototype of our future multi-touch table. This means they could digitally place their hands on the Gutenberg Bible, the “Book of Books”, “leaf through” its pages and look at several details of this printed work. In the near future, the visitors of the Gutenberg-Museum shall have the opportunity of “flipping through” a complete scan of the so-called B42 (or 42-line Gutenberg-Bible) in an interactive and digital way.

Now let me move on to another topic. We are particularly proud that, after a long period of time, we can once again offer a travelling exhibition. It is entitled “Progress: freshly pressed! Manuscripts and Early Prints of the Gutenberg Museum Mainz” and was successfully shown at the Gutenberg-Museum, where it had its first venue, from January to September 2014.

This exhibition is about the changes which took place in the history of media in the middle of the 15th century ranging from the monastic scriptorium to the print shop.

Letterpress printing by means of moveable type conquered the world of media tempestuously and with great insistence. The confrontation between old and new, tradition and progress, adaptation and the breaking of rules characterizes the work of scribes, illuminators, and printers whose art is shown in this exhibition. Books had been copied by hand for more than thousand years. Now, letterpress printing began to flourish, and it gradually put an end to the work of scribes and illuminators.

The exhibition shows the impact which Gutenberg's invention had on books, the contents of those, and their buyers and producers. At this exhibition, 73 original manuscripts and incunabula, all from the collections of the Gutenberg-Museum, can be discovered and looked at. They give a short, but significant review of an important historical era in Europe with regard to its cultural history and history of technology: it is the transition from the medieval to the modern world.

Though this elaborate art of printing and illuminating books seems to be nostalgic to us today, in their time, incunabula were as modern as a cutting-edge notebook is to us now.

“Progress: Freshly Pressed!” can be shown in various places and rooms. It is especially suited for school groups (kids from 12 years onward) and those visitors who are interested in history. More detailed background information can be found in the information folder which was specially developed for this exhibition.

The exhibition consists, among other things, of two sections which can be shown separately. A reconstructed Gutenberg printing press can complement the exhibition technically and increase the visitors' interest in it. It can be used for printing demonstrations and be part of the educational programme.

Times have changed. The meaning of the term “museum” has changed from a temple of the Muses to a place of knowledge transfer and entertainment. Printing museums are rather young. They have never been royal collections, but civic museums. The Gutenberg-Museum, founded in 1900, renewed in 1962, and enlarged in 2000, has to observe new professional standards and meet new responsibilities. This does not only include our efforts to make the Museum more beautiful and its visit more comfortable and enjoyable such as by offering facilities for people with physical disabilities.

Our Museum's visitors, who come from all over the world, usually keep three topics in mind: Gutenberg, the Gutenberg Bibles, and the Gutenberg print shop. Now we are working on the development of a new “Museum profile“, which shall place a special emphasis on the “Man of the Millennium“. We want to show the great impact which Johannes Gutenberg had on the city of Mainz and how important Gutenberg's invention has been to the world.

At the same time, we intend to spotlight some treasures which so far have been put in the shade by the Gutenberg Bible so that they have remained largely unnoticed or have even never been on public exhibition.

What we actually have in mind is to transform the Gutenberg Museum into a house of stories which come alive. And: Our aim is to make the visitors understand that the second media revolution which we have today would not have been possible without the first media revolution which was caused by Johannes

Gutenberg's invention. The roots of today's information society with its big flood of information trace back to Mainz in the 15th century. This is what we want to show.

In the future, we want to create a new ordering principle for our permanent exhibition and we want to develop "didactic guidelines" to make the exhibits and main aspects easier to understand. We would like to have a common thread running through this exhibition, with Johannes Gutenberg and his bible as focal and starting points. All this actually means: we aim to show the correlations which exist between several (or even many) of our exhibits though they are from different time periods and places. The keyword is interconnection. We would like to dovetail the stories which our objects have got to tell.

The new concept for the Museum's content and the new arrangement of the exhibition building must go hand in hand with a new architecture. There will soon be an architecture competition in order to find a new wrapping for the new content. Next year we will know more clearly where the road will take us.

Last year, some building and repair work was already started. Several renovations at the administration building, which also houses our library, have recently been completed. Now the top floor has new office rooms, and the fire safety installations in this building comply with modern standards and requirements.

We consider it as an important task to adapt our buildings to modern standards, and we are also aware of the change of our visitors' expectations. All in all, the Gutenberg Museum must become fit for the future.

You can well imagine that the "complete package" has confronted us with several problems. Of course, there is actually too little staff at our disposal. But above all, there is the financial aspect which must be dealt with.

In order to get support for our new concept, we launched a lecture series entitled "New Perspectives for the Gutenberg-Museum". These lectures take place once in a while on Mondays. Well-known representatives from museums, the media sector, business enterprises, and other institutions present their ideas, make suggestions, give some good pieces of advice with regard to our Museum's development, and deliver insight into their own experience.

So far, there have been two lectures. The first lecture was given by Mrs. Sylvia von Metzler of the Städel Museum Association in Frankfurt (on the Main). This month, there was a lecture by Professor Peter Raue from Berlin, who also became known as Mr. "MoMA".

The Gutenberg-Museum is a municipal museum, and the municipal funds put at our disposal would not be sufficient for our intentions and ambitious projects. So we are grateful for all those who have offered their assistance.

All civic action strategies for our Museum have recently been brought together in an action alliance called "Gutenberg 2020". The financial kick-off for our new plans was a big fundraising event, a comedy night here in Mainz which was arranged by three comedians of our city. More than 1,000 people came to this event, enjoyed a great night out packed full of fun and laughter, and made their donations.

But we also found support in many other people and institutions and we will never tire of breaking new ground and finding some more helpers and sponsors.

In this connection, it is time again to express our sincere thanks to all those who have assisted us. Our special thanks go to the International Gutenberg Society and the Gutenberg Sponsorship Association. Both have always been good and reliable partners; the Gutenberg Society since 1900 and the Gutenberg Sponsorship Association for about twenty years. Both have never ceased to give us financial support for

our projects, special exhibitions, and new acquisitions. We are also very grateful for all the help that the Moses Foundation and the local Lions Clubs have given us.

In closing, I would like to underline that we see the Gutenberg-Museum as the treasure house of the City of Mainz, as a memorial to the inventor Johannes Gutenberg, and as an important part of the world's collective memory. So we want the new Gutenberg-Museum to show the global significance of Gutenberg's invention in an entertaining and interesting way and this with Mainz as the cradle of the art of printing.

With all this and all our future plans in mind I would like to say: I hope that we could tickle your interest right now. And: Please let us surprise you in the future!

But, for the time being, let us surprise you (a little bit) with our new Gutenberg film. This film replaced our traditional puppet film of the 1960s, which seemed to have run out of time in many respects. In our new film, Gutenberg comes literally down from the pedestal of his monument and by doing so, in some sense, he leads the viewers to our Museum. This magic trick may stand for a new way of Gutenberg presentation.