

## 'Mail-order' library

JOSEF SCHMIDT

Gerhard Schlitt, director of the technical information library (TIB) in Hanover said: "Basically we are a mail order house."

The "mail order house" is a cubic glass construction on the university campus, a neo-classical Guelph castle.

The technical information library is at the same time the university library, but the library is mainly "a mail order house." The TIB despatch department sends out 1,500 consignments of technical literature per day.

TIB is one of the largest libraries in the world. It has 1.26 million bound books, 769,000 microfilms and subscribe to 20,000 publications, 3,600 in West Germany, 3,800 in the Englishspeaking world, 6,000 from Eastern Europe and 1,500 from Asia, mainly Japan.

The library was founded in 1959 at the behest of the West German Research Society. There was a considerable demand for technical and scientific literature after twelve years of being cut off from international affairs by dictatorship and war. Next week the 25th anniversary of the library's founding will be celebrated.

The library with its extensive coverage of technical development ensures that there is no doubling up in research. Apart from the publications already mentioned the library has 137,000 German dissertations, 137,000 German and 55,000 in Russian, none of

which have been published, along with 120,000 volumes dealing with the proceedings of various conferences.

All technical universities subscribe to technical magazines, but TIB goes one better with company publications, although these might not have quite the same technical value.

Conference reports either come automatically from the organisers, when TIB is a participant, or they are applied for.

In between conference reports and specialist magazine publications there is "report literature," articles from association magazines, concluding reports from ministries, called "grey literature" in professional circles.

Twenty-five years there was considerable curiosity about technical literature from Russia and nothing was known about publications in Japan. That has changed. Russian publications that were difficult to come by were once the most prominent feature of the library, but this has now been overtaken by Japanese technical literature that accounts for about ten per cent the same figure as for Russian.

Foreign language publications are stored away in the original language, and in the main are used in the original, but TIB does have translation facilities. Gerhard Schlitt has a list of about 80 to 90 translators on hand, translators who are not only expert in the language concerned but also in the discipline involved. A trans

lation costs between DM1,500 and DM2,000.

The library is used in the main by students at the university, but there are about 2,000 regular "customers" from elsewhere, major engineering concerns, the electro-and pharmaceuticals industry and medium-sized operations as well as researchers.

Gerhard Schlitt said that anyone could apply to the library for information.

If a person wants to loan a book or a publication on the spot this can be done free of charge via the loan system of West German libraries. To apply for a loan there is a special form available and it costs ten deutschmarks. The book is delivered fairly within two to three days.

If the publication is required urgently this can be done within a day and costs twenty deutschmarks. Requests per telefax cost DM25.

There are approximately 340,000 requests for publications per year, 80 per cent of which are dealt with immediately. Five per cent of applications require research. The remainder of the requests are those that cannot be met.

The loan operation employs 20, including 47 qualified librarians. The costs of the two libraries, TIB and the university library, are borne 30 per cent by central government

although the university library pays 10 per cent of the budget because of the university library.