



Librarians on the Road: An Experience Report



26 January 2026

MELA/MELCOM International Joint Annual Conference

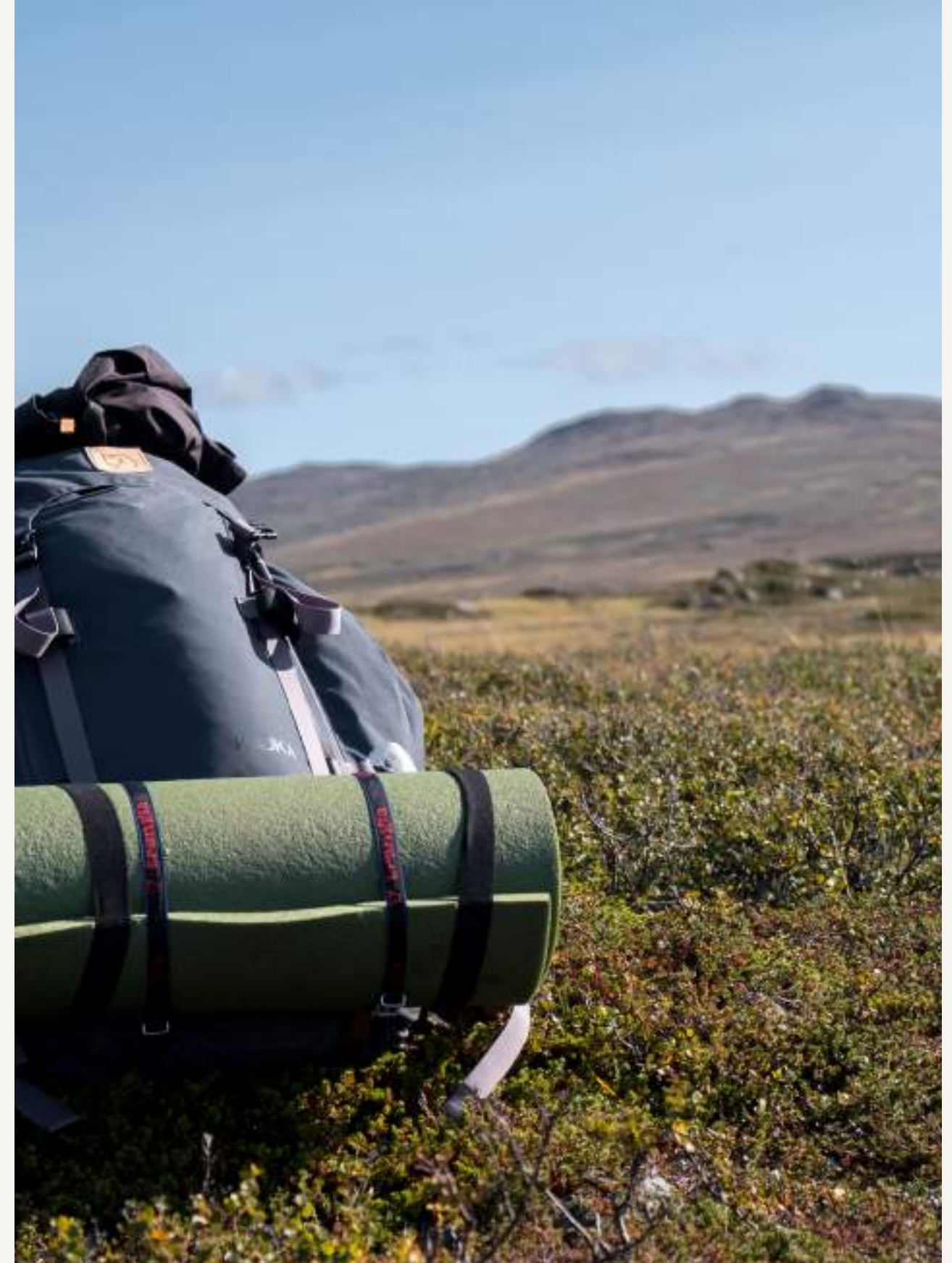
Bavarian State Library / Bamberg University Library

Leo Wittmann

Introduction

Internships as part of library training

- Can internships complement library training in the context of Middle Eastern Librarianship?
- What are the benefits?
- What obstacles stand in the way of completing internships?
- (How) can those obstacles be overcome?



Structure



01 Library training in Germany

02 Internships

03 Resources

04 Conclusions

Training future librarians in Germany (Munich Model)

“Referendariat”

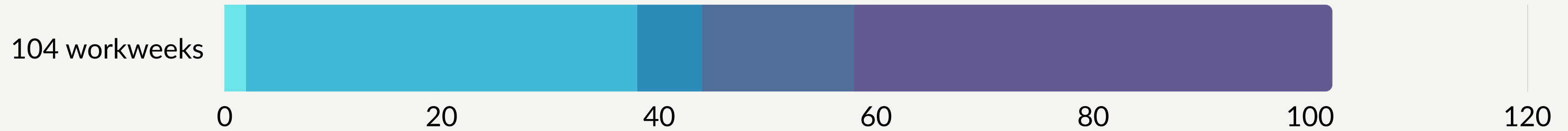
Required two-year preparatory service for subject librarianship and/or managerial functions

- ▶ Recruitment tied to a specific academic discipline
- ▶ Training itself not strictly subject-oriented
- ▶ First year practical training, second year theoretical training
- ▶ Possibility for external internships

Time frame



- Introduction course
- Practical training (1)
- Mandatory internships
- Internships/Practical training (2)
- Theory



The "itinerary"

30th of June – 18th of July:
Cambridge University Library

26th of May – 6th of June:
Berlin State Library

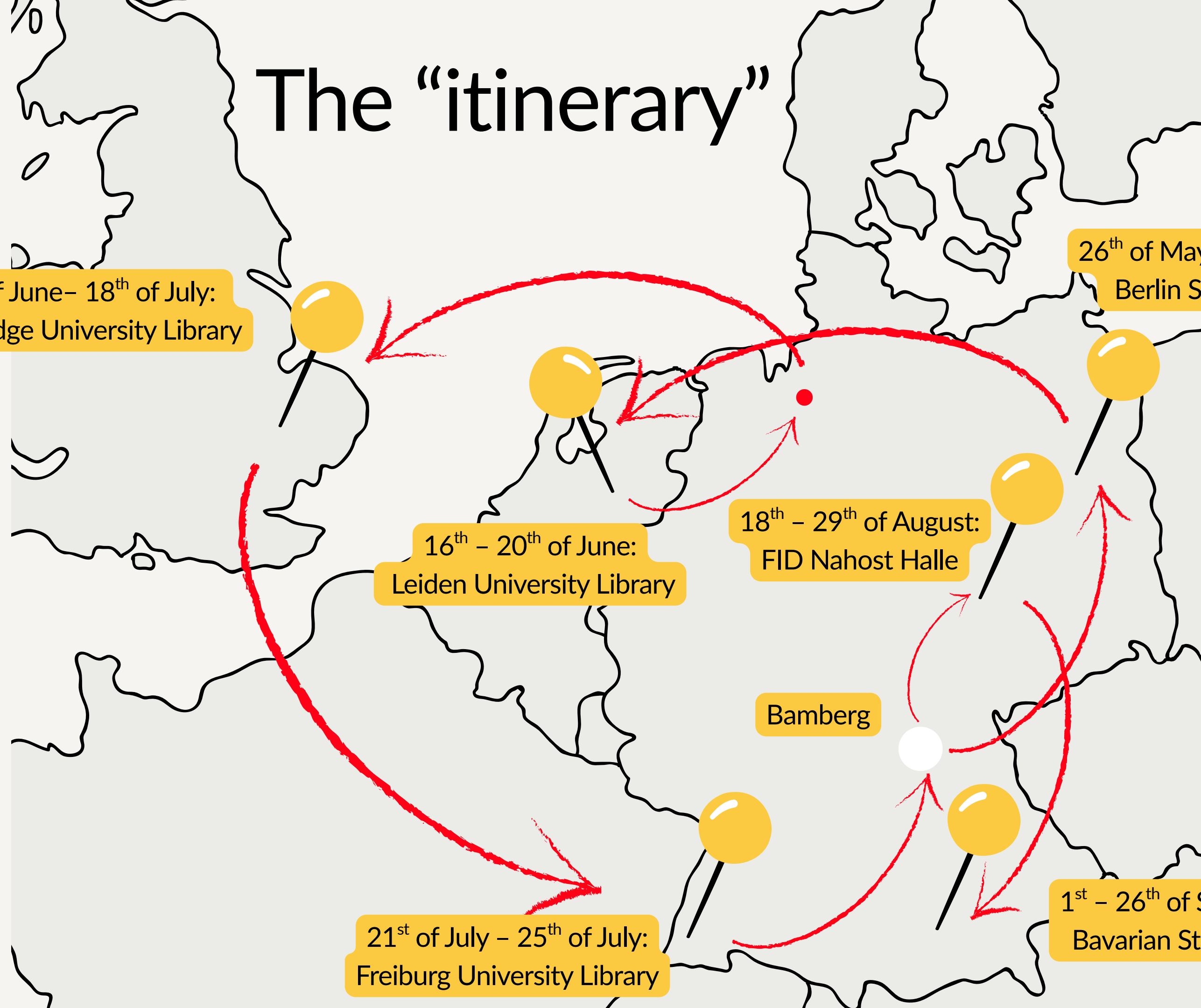
16th – 20th of June:
Leiden University Library

18th – 29th of August:
FID Nahost Halle

Bamberg

21st of July – 25th of July:
Freiburg University Library

1st – 26th of September:
Bavarian State Library



Resources

01

Institutional support

- Required documents and formal approvals
- Importance of official recognition of internships
- Bureaucratic challenges, especially abroad (UK visa)

02

Time and flexibility

- High level of flexibility from the training library
- Use of annual leave
- Efficient scheduling of internships and breaks

03

Financial resources

- Main cost factors: accommodation + travel
- Visas and administrative fees
- Cost reduction through: staying with friends + subletting my room in Bamberg

04

Network

- Professional networks as key facilitators
- Personal networks crucial for accommodation

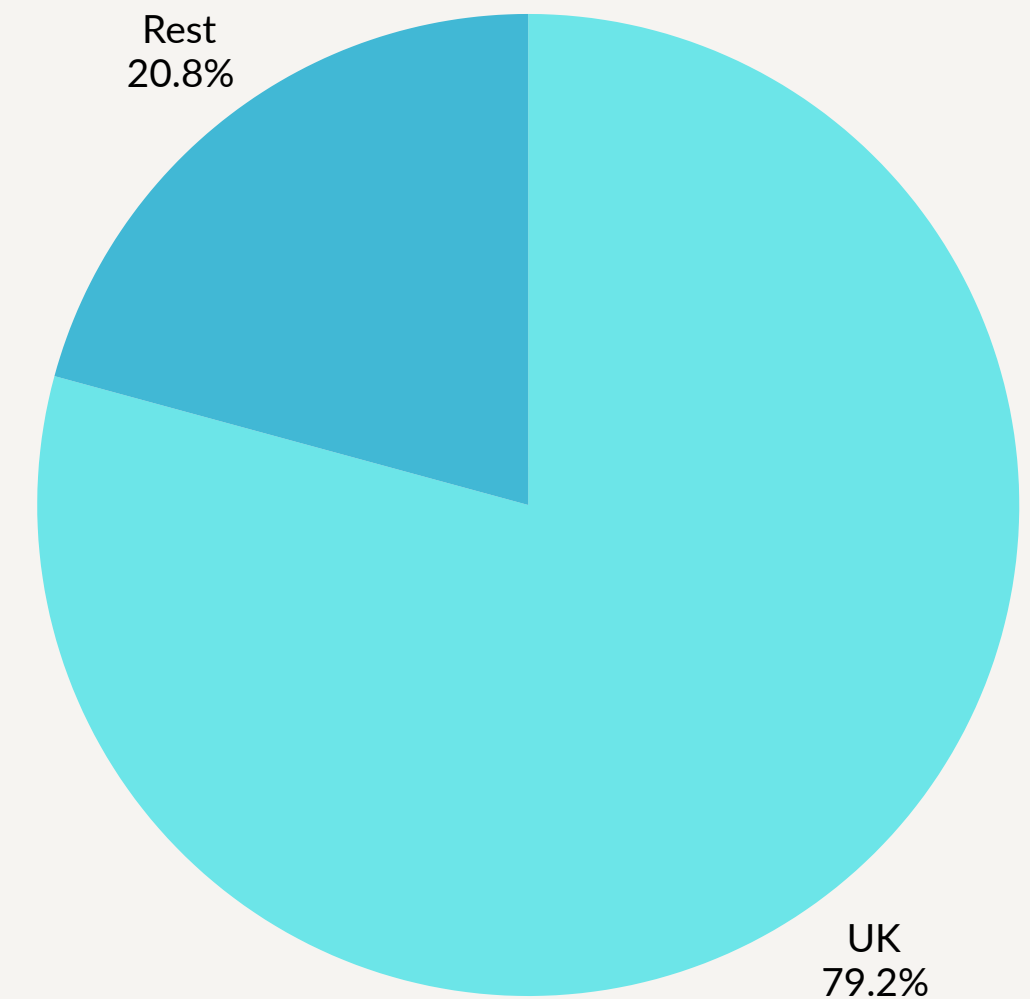
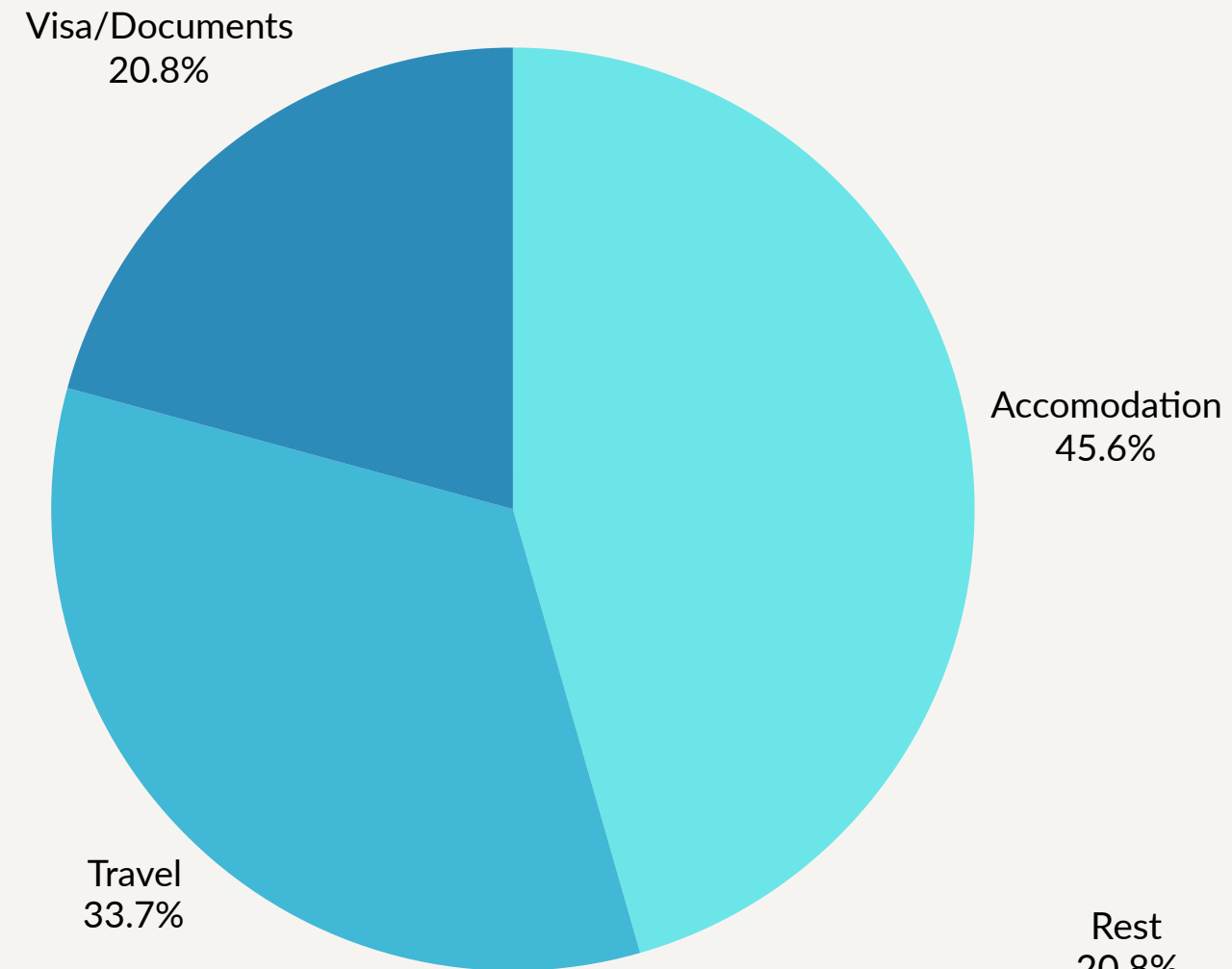
Expenses



in total 1.969€

Cost drivers

- Airbnb (3 weeks): ~900€
- Work Visa UK: ~400€
- EuroStar train: ~190€



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Conclusions

- Gained insight into tools, methods, and workflows used by Middle Eastern librarians
- Observed diverse user services and compared practices across institutions
- Learned about regional vendors and acquisition profiles
- Developed an understanding of common challenges within the field
- Sense of belonging to a professional community

Conclusions

01

Institutional support

- Highly dependent on the home library or institution
- In my experience, host libraries and institutions were very helpful and supportive
- Most documents were required by authorities, not by libraries

02

Time and flexibility

- Also highly dependent on the home library or institution
- Depending on personal circumstances
- Is the use of annual leave an option?

03

Financial resources

- The scholarship landscape for internships looks rather bleak
- BID (Bibliothek & Information International) offers grants for professional visits to Germany (up to three weeks): <https://bi-international.de/en/grants/#main-in>

04

Network

- Acquisition of internships through personal contacts very successful
- Can professional associations act as enablers and multipliers?



Thank You

26 January 2026

