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Eventually, everyone visiting my Wissenschaftskolleg office would comment on the out-sized stacks of reprints and my outdated habit of marshalling paper copies when electronic versions were readily available. I devoted a good portion of my first days at Wiko tracking down titles and amassing this literature, followed by a first-pass reading to identify knowledge gaps and any missed or parallel resources, leading to subsequent cycles that would hopefully capture the complete literature of the topic.

The chronicle of my ventures to procure and print these articles could be the subject of another essay altogether; but, in due course, I welcomed the illogics of long-distance access to the libraries at my home institution in the States, and, after *many* trials, pinpointed

the printer proximate to my office (... and if anyone is still wondering why an article on bacterial evolution materialized on the institutional letterhead they just loaded, wonder no more).

The routine of reading, annotating, and accumulating these papers resulted in more than enough material to fill the coming months, and the piles grew until even those concerning subjects of peripheral interest had become rather daunting. But there was an unconsidered downside to such workdays: what would I read for distraction, for those passing bouts in the mornings and evenings? I had polished off my small stash of imported novels during the transatlantic flight and those first few odd-houred nights after our arrival and was left with the denizens of our apartment: an outdated *Time* magazine and a nearly complete set of Wiko annual yearbooks. I half-heartedly scrolled some online and e-book sources, but I am a hard-copy person, prone to dog-earing the pages of paperbacks.

With habits so hard to break, I fished for suggestions for English-language booksellers and heard endorsements of St. George's and The Book Nook (two votes each) and, with less enthusiasm, Shakespeare's (which I favored, slightly if only to compare with its cramped, grubby counterparts in Paris and Berkeley). However, each of the recommended shops seemed to involve a crosstown journey, and expeditions on the still-cryptic transit system required planning and would need to wait.

My situation improved, substantially and unpredictably, while satisfying some more proximate needs. During that first trip to the Grunewald Rewe – and its adjacent *Getränkemarkt* – I discovered BücherboXX. They say that salvation can come in a cup or a well, but mine took the form of a blue-capped phonebooth, whose quirky holdings became a source of continual fascination. The relic payphone and coinbox had been removed, and, instead, the kiosk was stocked with hundreds of books and no apparent system of classification, save the one shelf devoted to Gleis 17. From that day on, every trip to the market, or return on the S7, included a skim of its ever-changing inventory: one time, there'd be a row of hardbacks with identical jackets, and on another occasion, a stack of outdated travel guides on the floor.

Only about 2% of the BücherboXX contents were in English, which made it easy to spot something suitable but difficult to be picky about what I would read. And as an added benefit, the conversion of familiar titles between languages served as a rudimentary German lesson (although I am fairly certain that a *Nachtigall* is not in the same avian Family as a Mockingbird and that being *stört*-ed is highly preferable to being killed.). There was a copy of *Jurassic Park* that defied my (and apparently everyone else's) interest for the entire

duration of my visit, but other than that, I pretty much took my chances on anything else. The books tended toward some predictable topics – a novel about an American living in Berlin; wartime thrillers set in Germany – and I suspect that many the shiny bestsellers were impulse-purchased in airports. Once there was a novel so strange and arcane that I could not imagine how it ended up in Germany, let alone this BücherboXX.

All told, I read six of the 20 or so novels that I retrieved by this means, but only one was a keeper: How had I ever missed Jerome Jerome's *Three Men in a Boat*?; and I am forever grateful to whomever decided it was time to discard this “masterpiece” and bequeath it to the collection. In my final week at Wiko, the last final visit yielded nothing worth reading. I filled any available shelf space with books that I had brought, bought, or brokered during my stay. Those remaining went in a pile of the floor, and I laid a classic on top in hopes that the next victim of the BücherboXX might stop to wonder about their donor.