

# Making the Library an Attractive Employer

## Inspirations from Dutch Libraries

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### Zusammenfassung:

Im Rahmen des „Librarian in Residence“-Programm von Bibliothek & Information International und dem Goethe-Institut untersuchte Christina Kläre im Juni 2019 die Umsetzung von Personalmanagement in niederländischen Bibliotheken. Dafür wurden Interviews an niederländischen Universitätsbibliotheken und an der Nationalbibliothek geführt. Der Aufsatz stellt die Befunde zu den eingesetzten Personalmarketinginstrumenten vor.

### Summary:

As part of the “Librarian in Residence” programme of Bibliothek & Information International and the Goethe-Institut, Christina Kläre investigated the implementation of human resource management in Dutch libraries in June 2019. To this end, interviews were conducted at Dutch university libraries and at the National Library. The article presents the findings on the personnel marketing instruments used.

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## 1. Introduction

*„The agility of the organization highly depends on the agility of our staff members to be able to cope with all those changes around us.“<sup>1</sup>*

The information market is in continuous change. Staff plays a major role in designing the library of the future. Employees' creativity, skills, competencies, and agility shape the service portfolio of a library and have an impact on the customers' perception of the library. Although librarians discuss methods for human resources management (HRM) at conferences and in publications, holistic approaches that deal with current challenges in HR marketing and best practices, especially focusing on methods abroad, are rare. Therefore, in June 2019, Bibliothek & Information International – the standing committee of Bibliothek & Information Deutschland (BID) – the Federal Association of German Library and Information Associations – and the Goethe-Institute offered the author the opportunity to survey

1 Interview conducted with Eric van Driel (KB – National Library of the Netherlands), Den Haag, 21.06.2019.

HRM in Dutch libraries as “Librarian in Residence”. Though the paper focuses on academic libraries, the practices of the KB – National Library of the Netherlands have been surveyed as well to identify differences and similarities in HRM. The study observes HR marketing and especially instruments and challenges in recruitment and retaining staff in Dutch libraries.<sup>2</sup>

As every library and its HRM is influenced by individual conditions and circumstances like the specific library strategy, this article does not evaluate the different HRM styles and instruments but rather picks out some inspiring, effective, and maybe innovative cases to stimulate (German) libraries to rethink HRM and adapt styles and/or instruments. Hence, the paper can serve as an HR marketing catalogue – with no claim to completeness.

## 2. Research topic

As predefined by the “Librarian in Residence” scholarship 2019, the research topic was HRM in the Netherlands and can be summarized in the research question: What strategies and instruments make libraries an attractive employer?<sup>3</sup> The topic is highly relevant: Because human resources determine the quality and innovation of products and services, they are the most important resources any institution has. Hence, HRM offers the best strategies and instruments libraries have to cope with current developments like digitization of science and education and the resulting new formats and types of information.<sup>4</sup>

## 3. Research design

The study focuses on HRM in university libraries. During the stay of (only) three weeks in the Netherlands, qualitative and some quantitative data from nine university libraries<sup>5</sup> was collected as well as from the KB – National Library of the Netherlands.

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- 2 First and foremost, I want to express my gratitude to the Dutch libraries, the interviewees and their colleagues for their support. The interviews and the guided tours did not only lay the foundation for this paper, but also served as great inspiration for my future work and research. I am also especially grateful for the organizational support by the librarians of the Goethe-Institute Netherlands, Sinah Grotfels and Barbara Mulzer; their experience and contacts brought my residence in the Netherlands to perfection. Moreover, I would like to thank BI-International und the Goethe-Institute for funding the project. Furthermore, I am indebted to Duisburg-Essen University Library for their help and support.
  - 3 Cf. BI-International; Goethe-Institut: Librarian in Residence – LiR 2019: zwei Stipendien, 2019. Online: <[https://media02.culturebase.org/data/docs-bideutschland/LiR2019%20Ausschreibungstext\\_v2\\_BM%202.pdf](https://media02.culturebase.org/data/docs-bideutschland/LiR2019%20Ausschreibungstext_v2_BM%202.pdf)>, last accessed on 08.02.2020.
  - 4 Cf. Bilo, Albert; Pohl, Doris: Personal in Entwicklung. Das Personalentwicklungskonzept der Universitätsbibliothek Duisburg-Essen, in: Schulz, Susanne (ed.): Personalentwicklung an Hochschulen – weiterdenken. Berufliche Lebensphasen zeitgemäß und innovativ begleiten, Bielefeld 2015 (Hochschulmanagement und Personalentwicklung), p. 138.
  - 5 Interviews were conducted with representatives (especially library directors) of libraries or HR advisors/liaisons of the following universities: Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen, Technische Universiteit Delft, Universiteit van Amsterdam, Universiteit Leiden, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam, Universiteit Utrecht, Universiteit Maastricht, Rijksuniversiteit Groningen. There was not enough time to also conduct interviews at Technische Universiteit Eindhoven, Universiteit Twente, Tilburg University, and Wageningen University.

To survey the Dutch libraries' HRM practices, a questionnaire<sup>6</sup> was used. The expert interviews focused on HR liaisons, HR advisors, and managers and directors of Dutch libraries. These experts play a hybrid role by serving as source of information with respect to their knowledge about staff of the respective library and the organizational framework on the one hand, and as research subject due to their professional practice on the other hand.<sup>7</sup> The interviews can be classified as systematizing expert interviews.<sup>8</sup> The interviewer acted as a co-expert, as she can rely on knowledge about HRM from management science and experience from HRM at Duisburg-Essen University Library, though the interviewees provided concrete knowledge of the Dutch library and university perspective.<sup>9</sup> Before summarizing the main findings from the interviews, the following chapter highlights system similarities and differences, which constrain the comparability of the findings.

## 4. System differences and similarities

Dutch and German (university) libraries face a different framework regarding (labour) law, (education) policy, organization and culture. This framework restricts or facilitates specific aspects of HRM and limits the options of adopting Dutch HRM practices in German libraries and vice versa.

### 4.1. Labour law

The Dutch Collective Labor Agreements (CLAs) provide a labour law framework comparable to the German CLAs for public employees on the national, state, and local level. The CLA sets the framework for HRM-related strategies, tasks, and instruments. For example, the CLA defines the full-time working hours per week, the holiday hours per calendar year, and the salaries. Note that the CLAs may not contradict the law. While German university libraries deal with two kinds of employment status (either civil servants or public employees), Dutch deal with only one kind of staff (the university's employees) in general.<sup>10</sup> Based on the CLA, negotiated and signed by the Association of Dutch Universities and the employee organizations, each university provides extensions and interpretations of the standards in the CLA.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, for librarians working at universities of applied sciences, a different standard CLA holds.<sup>12</sup> The Dutch labour law sets general standards, e.g. about part time.

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6 The questionnaire can be downloaded from <<https://doi.org/10.17185/duepublico/71522>>

7 Cf. Bogner, Alexander; Menz, Wolfgang: The theory-generating expert interview. Epistemological interest, forms of knowledge, interaction, in: Bogner, Alexander; Littig, Beate; Menz, Wolfgang (eds.): Interviewing experts, Basingstoke 2009 (Research methods series), p. 47.

8 Cf. ibid., pp. 46-47.

9 Cf. ibid., p. 58.

10 With the exception of hybrid institutions like the Library of University of Amsterdam / Hogeschool van Amsterdam, which deal with the CLAs for universities' and for university of applied sciences' staff.

11 Cf. Association of Universities in the Netherlands (VSNU): Collective labour agreement Dutch universities. 1 July 2016 – 31 December 2019 inclusive, Den Haag 2017, Online: <<https://www.caouniversiteiten.nl/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/CAO-NU-July-2017-December-2019.pdf>>, last accessed on 08.02.2020. University specific labour agreements aren't taken into account in this article.

12 Cf. Vereniging Hogescholen: Collectieve arbeidsovereenkomst voor het hoger beroepsonderwijs. 1 april 2017 tot en met 31 maart 2018, Den Haag 2017. Online: <[https://www.vereniginghogescholen.nl/system/knowledge\\_base/attachments/files/000/000/771/original/CAO\\_2017-2018\\_DEF.pdf?1495457750](https://www.vereniginghogescholen.nl/system/knowledge_base/attachments/files/000/000/771/original/CAO_2017-2018_DEF.pdf?1495457750)>, last accessed on 08.02.2020. The CLAs of universities of applied sciences aren't taken into account in this article.

### 4.2. The HR market

Most of the interviewees stressed the importance of recruiting, as many employees will retire in the next five to ten years.<sup>13</sup> The situation is caused by Dutch demographics: "We saw a strong growth of Dutch universities in the 70s, 80s. So, at that time many staff were hired and they're now at the point of retirement."<sup>14</sup> Or, as another interviewee put it: "It's a very tense labour market. There's a shortage of everyone and everything. So that's hard for university libraries and universities in general to compete on the labour market."<sup>15</sup>

Due to the EU Bologna agreement, in September 2002 the new bachelor and master programme "Information Science" was introduced in the Netherlands. The bachelor incorporated information and archival science.<sup>16</sup> After further developing the programmes, hardly any university or university of applied sciences now offers a library focused degree programme. E.g., the University of Amsterdam offers the bachelor programme "Media and Information", which focuses mainly on media and information culture; while the master degree "Archival and Information Studies" focuses on records management and archiving, without being library-specific.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, bachelor graduates of library studies, who are able to perform tasks equivalent to the German "upper grade of the civil service", e.g. cataloguing and teaching information literacy, are nearly non-existent on the Dutch labour market.

The interviewees mentioned advantages and disadvantages of this lack of "library specialists" on the labour market, especially in the future, when the staff members with a library education will retire: Because only a few librarians are available on the labour market and libraries and their services are considered to be in transition, libraries nowadays rather search for a special set of skills instead of a trained librarian. These skills were mentioned in every interview and can be summarized as follows: Employees of libraries need to

- be service minded and client focused and to "have a sense of a businesslike approach."<sup>18</sup> As they deliver a service, library staff needs to understand the clients' needs and questions, though not every staff member must be able to provide the specific solution.<sup>19</sup> Additionally, being service minded implies confident behavior towards the clients, especially researchers.<sup>20</sup>

13 E.g. interview conducted with Maria A.M. Heijne and Elsbeth G. Boeker (Library of University of Amsterdam / Hogeschool van Amsterdam), Amsterdam, 11.06.2019; interview conducted with Ingrid M. Wijk (Maastricht University Library), Maastricht, 19.06.2019.

14 Interview conducted with Matthijs van Otegem (Erasmus University Library), Rotterdam, 14.06.2019.

15 Interview conducted with Ingrid M. Wijk (Maastricht University Library), Maastricht, 19.06.2019.

16 Cf. Boekhorst, Albert K.; Mackenzie Owen, John S.: Bologna, the Netherlands and information science, in: Education for information 21 (1), 2003, pp. 7-19.

17 Cf. University of Amsterdam: Media and Information, <<https://www.uva.nl/en/programmes/bachelors/media-and-information/media-and-information.html?origin=0UW%2FN1zHRVCfgfmL3cdmVg>>, last accessed on 08.02.2020; University of Amsterdam: Archival and Information Studies (Media Studies), <<https://www.uva.nl/en/shared-content/subsites/graduate-school-of-humanities/en/dual-masters/archival-and-information-studies-heritage-studies/archival-studies-heritage-studies.html>>, last accessed on 08.02.2020.

18 Interview conducted with Maria A.M. Heijne and Elsbeth G. Boeker (Library of University of Amsterdam / Hogeschool van Amsterdam), Amsterdam, 11.06.2019.

19 E.g. interview conducted with Marianne Renkema (Utrecht University Library), Utrecht, 18.06.2019.

20 E.g. interview conducted with Ingrid M. Wijk (Maastricht University Library), Maastricht, 19.06.2019.

- be responsible. Even if they cannot answer a client's question, they are responsible to help this person e.g. by consulting a colleague.<sup>21</sup>
- be collaborative and communicative with respect to the service delivery and team work. In this way, "each member of staff contributes to the team's achievements based on their own skills and abilities."<sup>22</sup>
- be professional and competent in their respective field (e.g. teaching). Especially as not everything can be solved by training and education, the specific background of the employee is important.<sup>23</sup>
- be open and approachable. This mindset does not only refer to the open science and open education movements. Openness means being able to change and to be open for different and new concepts and ideas.<sup>24</sup>
- be flexible and eager to learn. These skills are strongly related to being "open and approachable": Employees have to be flexible, which implies the ability and motivation to learn new things.<sup>25</sup>

In addition, one kind of literacy is very important for library staff – namely digital literacy. This can be broadly defined as "the constantly changing practices, through which people make traceable meanings using digital technologies."<sup>26</sup> Still, the specific competencies depend on the tasks of the employee; hence not everyone needs to be able e.g. to write software programs.<sup>27</sup>

However, certain basic library competencies are still of importance in Dutch university libraries: Cataloguers' expertise is of significance regarding research and educational output like research data of the respective university.<sup>28</sup> But as those skills are getting less and less available on the labour market, internal training and knowledge management gain importance. Consequently, Dutch university libraries take advantage of the labour market situation, as they no longer have to justify why they do not search for weeks, months or even years for a trained librarian. Instead, they pick a candidate from the pool of different educational backgrounds by distinguishing between skills and competencies which can be supported by HR development and those which cannot be learned on-the-job. However, picking from the same pool of candidates as universities and commercial organizations leads to intense competition.<sup>29</sup>

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21 E.g. interview conducted with Matthijs van Otegem (Erasmus University Library), Rotterdam, 14.06.2019.

22 Radboud Universiteit: A significant impact. Strategy Radboud University, 2019. Online: <<https://www.ru.nl/english/about-us/our-university/mission-vision/vm/strategic-plan/>>, last accessed on 08.02.2020, p. 42.

23 E.g. interview conducted with Han G. Heijmans (TU Delft Library), Delft, 07.06.2019.

24 E.g. interview conducted with Eric van Driel (KB – National Library of the Netherlands), Den Haag, 21.06.2019.

25 E.g. ibid.

26 Gillen, Julia; Barton, David: Digital literacies. A research briefing by the Technology Enhanced Learning phase of the Technology and Learning Research Programme, London 2010, p. 10.

27 Interview conducted with Ingrid M. Wijk (Maastricht University Library), Maastricht, 19.06.2019.

28 Interview conducted with Kurt de Belder (Leiden University Libraries), Leiden, 12.06.2019; interview conducted with Hilde N. van Wijngaarden (University Library of Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam), Amsterdam, 13.06.2019.

29 E.g. interview conducted with Maria A.M. Heijne and Elsbeth G. Boeker (Library of University of Amsterdam / Hogeschool van Amsterdam), Amsterdam, 11.06.2019.

But libraries are not only competing with private companies: As “there are lots of university libraries in the Netherlands that need the same people”<sup>30</sup>, the competition within the (university) library sector is also strong. Therefore, some universities promote expanding the target group by focusing on the international market.<sup>31</sup> And if these employees are well connected, they can in turn serve as recruiting channels for new candidates.<sup>32</sup>

Indeed there are more participants on the Dutch HR market for libraries than just libraries, potential employees, and competitive employers. On the university level and the library network level, internal partners can support and increase the effectiveness and efficiency of HRM. Moreover, external partners provide services in the areas of recruiting and HR development.

### Internal partners

University libraries never act as independent organizations. They are central operating units of universities. Hence, they can be seen as departments providing information and publication related services. It must also be taken into account that Dutch university libraries are relatively small with respect to full-time equivalents (FTEs). Thus, the surveyed Dutch university libraries do not have an HR department of their own, but act as a customer of the university's HR department. Only a few libraries like Delft University Library have an HR liaison at the library, who “make[s] sure that [the library's] issues are conveyed to the HR department.”<sup>33</sup> Another exception is the KB, due to its size and independency of a promoting institution like a university.<sup>34</sup> Even at the KB, though, the HR experts work as advisors for the management. Hence, HR is mainly a management task.

To provide customer-oriented HR services for the university libraries, the Dutch universities have installed HR advisors who serve the library (and often also a faculty or an additional university's central operating unit) like a key account manager regarding HR services. This kind of cooperation between the HR department and the library leads to efficient provision of HR services and supports the library management and team leaders with regard to strategic and operative HR issues.<sup>35</sup>

Employee representatives have a role in the ‘Dienstraad’. The Dienstraad can be compared to the staff council, though in some Dutch libraries its advisory function is more pronounced than in most German university libraries. E.g. at Leiden University Libraries, there are regular meetings between the Dienstraad and the library director.<sup>36</sup>

30 Interview conducted with Barbara J.G.C. Eggels (University Library of Radboud University), Nijmegen, 05.06.2019.

31 E.g. interview conducted with Frank Nienhuis and Ryanka Hazekamp (University of Groningen Library), Groningen, 25.06.2019; interview conducted with Han G. Heijmans (TU Delft Library), Delft, 07.06.2019.

32 Interview conducted with Han G. Heijmans (TU Delft Library), Delft, 07.06.2019.

33 Ibid.

34 Interview conducted with Eric van Driel (KB – National Library of the Netherlands), Den Haag, 21.06.2019.

35 Cf. Sauter, Werner: Personalmanagement, Berlin 2007, 1.4.5 Das Personalreferentensystem.

36 Cf. interview conducted with Kurt de Belder (Leiden University Libraries), Leiden, 12.06.2019.

### External partners

The Koninklijke Nederlandse Vereniging van Informatieprofessionals (KNVI<sup>37</sup>, Royal Society of Information Professionals, German pendants: BIB and VDB) plays a key role as external partner in HR. It has installed a working group on library education, which organizes workshops and conferences.<sup>38</sup>

Especially for developing library specific skills, GO Opleidingen<sup>39</sup> is a partner for libraries in the Netherlands. Its function is comparable to e.g. the ZBIW – Zentrum für Bibliotheks- und Informationswissenschaftliche Weiterbildung<sup>40</sup> (Centre for further education in library and information science) in Germany. Still, not many interviewees mentioned GO as a partner e.g. for HR development, while the ZBIW is the first choice for workshops and certified training courses for lifelong learning with respect to the changing working conditions, at least in North-Rhine Westphalia.

Though the Samenwerkingsverband van universiteitsbibliotheek en de Koninklijke Bibliotheek (UKB<sup>41</sup>, the Dutch consortium of university libraries and the National library of The Netherlands) does not focus on HR topics, the network of university libraries plays an important role in the Netherlands. It facilitates the collaboration regarding e.g. dissemination of vacancies and sets common strategies. Some of those strategies are even HR related as in the “Beleidsplan 2011-2015”, which emphasizes the development and sharing of new competencies for librarians.<sup>42</sup>

In some cases, Dutch libraries make use of HR service providers for temporary agency work or for recruitment.<sup>43</sup> Recruitment agencies can get in touch with experts, who may not have had libraries as potential employers on their radar.<sup>44</sup>

## 5. HR marketing in Dutch libraries

As “structure follows strategy”<sup>45</sup>, Dutch libraries base their HR decisions on plans. The personal (policy) plans or strategic personal plans (SPP) are cooperative projects between the library management and the HR advisor; additionally, employees are invited to participate e.g. in the SPP working group.<sup>46</sup> This includes an HR SWOT-analysis by considering the available staff, their skills and competencies

37 Koninklijke Nederlandse Vereniging van Informatieprofessionals (KNVI), <<https://www.knvi.nl/>>, last accessed on 08.02.2020.

38 Interview conducted with Matthijs van Otegem (Erasmus University Library), Rotterdam, 14.06.2019.

39 GO Opleidingen: School voor informatie, <<https://goopleidingen.nl/>>, last accessed on 08.02.2020.

40 ZBIW – Zentrum für Bibliotheks- und Informationswissenschaftliche Weiterbildung der TH Köln, <[https://www.th-koeln.de/weiterbildung/zbiw\\_5865.php](https://www.th-koeln.de/weiterbildung/zbiw_5865.php)>, last accessed on 08.02.2020.

41 UKB – samenwerkingsverband van Nederlandse universiteitsbibliotheek en de Koninklijke Bibliotheek, <<https://www.ukb.nl/>>, last accessed on 08.02.2020.

42 Cf. UKB – samenwerkingsverband van Nederlandse universiteitsbibliotheek en de Koninklijke Bibliotheek: Beleidsplan 2011-2015. De wetenschappelijke bibliotheek op weg naar ‘the cloud’. Online: <<https://www.ukb.nl/sites/default/files/docs/bp1115.pdf>>, last accessed on 08.02.2020, p. 15.

43 E.g. interview conducted with Eric van Driel (KB – National Library of the Netherlands), Den Haag, 21.06.2019.

44 E.g. interview conducted with Barbara J.G.C. Eggels (University Library of Radboud University), Nijmegen, 05.06.2019.

45 Cf. Chandler, Alfred D.: Strategy and structure. Chapters in the history of the industrial enterprise, based on intensive studies of General motors, DuPont, Standard Oil of New Jersey, and Sears, Roebuck, Cambridge, Mass. 1978<sup>10</sup>.

46 E.g. interview conducted with Maria A.M. Heijne and Elsbeth G. Boeker (Library of University of Amsterdam / Hogeschool van Amsterdam), Amsterdam, 11.06.2019.

and by pinpointing the skills gap.<sup>47</sup> “That’s a very helpful framework to identify in terms of quantity and quality, what do we need now and in the future and are there any problems? (...) What are the obstacles and is the quality we need, is that available at the labour market or not?”<sup>48</sup> Those SPPs are linked to the library’s strategy by considering the future services and the developments at the information market. Libraries invest time in developing HR strategies because “HR strategy is the most important factor or tool to make the change in the library.”<sup>49</sup>

As HR marketing focuses on potential employees (external HR marketing) and employed staff (internal HR marketing) by especially supporting the recruiting and retaining of staff,<sup>50</sup> it provides instruments to attract (high) potentials by strengthening the employer attractiveness and hence the competitive position of the library on the labour market. Therefore, in the current labour market situation (cf. chapter 4.2.), HR marketing should become more important for libraries. This hypothesis was confirmed in the interviews.

### 5.1. External HR marketing

According to Dirk Lippold, segmentation, market positioning, signaling, communication, and personnel selection and onboarding are instruments of external HR marketing.<sup>51</sup>

#### 5.1.1. Segmentation

With focus on HR needs assessment, the libraries define the target group for a vacancy according to the qualification profile. The dimension may be

- a specific sector such as a candidate with a background in library science or who works as a researcher in a specific field of science, or
- a specific geographical area, e.g. somebody with a background in Dutch copyright law or international candidates.

Afterwards, the demographic, socio-economic, psychographic (lifestyle, interests, attitudes), behaviour- and motive-related criteria are combined or selected.<sup>52</sup> This is reflected in the Dutch libraries’ focus on skills and professionals rather than on librarians, although this is partly induced by the labour market (cf. chapter 4.2.).

<sup>47</sup> E.g. interview conducted with Rob Noorda and Ryanka Hazekamp (University of Groningen Library), Groningen, 25.06.2019.

<sup>48</sup> Interview conducted with Frank Nienhuis and Ryanka Hazekamp (University of Groningen Library), Groningen, 25.06.2019.

<sup>49</sup> Interview conducted with Matthijs van Otegem (Erasmus University Library), Rotterdam, 14.06.2019.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Lippold, Dirk: Personalmanagement im digitalen Wandel. Die Personalmarketing-Gleichung als prozess- und wert-orientierter Handlungsrahmen, Berlin 2019<sup>3</sup>, p. 8.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. ibd., p. 89.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. ibd., p. 114.

### **5.1.2. Market positioning**

Among other things, market positioning deals with suitable channels for publishing the vacancy, taking into account the target group's information channels.<sup>53</sup> Some channels are very common, especially platforms for careers in research and higher education such as AcademicTransfer,<sup>54</sup> and social networks such as Twitter, Facebook, or LinkedIn.<sup>55</sup> But "lots of our respondents for vacancies come out of the networks (...) between the universities."<sup>56</sup> In addition to selecting the channels for publishing the vacancy, libraries must take into account the image of (1) the library sector, (2) the specific library, (3) the workplace design, and (4) financial and non-financial compensation.

The image of the library sector is especially relevant for recruiting from other sectors. Libraries are still associated with bookshelves; their pro-active influence on the information and publication landscape has not yet reached every HR target group. This can lead to a lack of job applications. Here, networks like the UKB or the KNVI play an important role, as the sector image cannot be altered by one library alone.

The image of the specific library, indicated by corporate culture and brand awareness, can compensate for a negative image or even strengthen a positive one. This can be influenced by the university's brand. A good example is the Rijksuniversiteit Groningen's employer branding strategy. The university's values, e.g. integrity and openness, are transferred to the working atmosphere and processes. International career fairs are examples for instruments by which this image can be communicated (cf. chapter 5.1.3.).<sup>57</sup> Moreover, these values come into effect in the revision of the recruiting process, e.g. the process has to be open and transparent and should not take too long.<sup>58</sup>

However, the image of the workplace design is far more important for applicants. The HR development portfolio, style of leadership, and the meeting of individual needs with regard to work-life balance are instruments which libraries can influence and use to strengthen this image independently from the library sector image. Thus, mentioning an attractive workplace design is routinely included in job advertisements of Dutch university libraries, e.g.: "The library is demanding an inspiring organization that offers many development opportunities for staff members."<sup>59</sup>

Even though libraries in general are not very flexible regarding salaries (e.g. the CLAs define the minimum and maximum salary), the CLAs still have advantages like a relatively high initial salary and rate increases without salary negotiations. Although the Dutch universities may offer a performance

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53 E.g. interview conducted with Kurt de Belder (Leiden University Libraries), Leiden, 12.06.2019.

54 AcademicTransfer, <<https://www.academictransfer.com/en>>, last accessed on 08.02.2020.

55 E.g. interview conducted with Barbara J.G.C. Eggels (University Library of Radboud University), Nijmegen, 05.06.2019.

56 Ibid.

57 Interview conducted with Frank Nienhuis and Ryanka Hazekamp (University of Groningen Library), Groningen, 25.06.2019.

58 Ibid.

59 Interview conducted with Kurt de Belder (Leiden University Libraries), Leiden, 12.06.2019.

bonus or a labour market-related bonus,<sup>60</sup> the options for providing financial incentives are limited. As the interviewees stressed, the labour market-related bonus does not increase competitiveness with respect to salaries paid in the private sector.<sup>61</sup>

### 5.1.3. Signaling

Signaling refers to the anonymous communication policy of the library and is mainly used for recruiting. Following the instruments of sales marketing, especially image brochures, employee newspapers (if publicly available), and job advertisements are published.

### 5.1.4. Communication

Communicating implies a dialogue between the candidate and the library, where the candidates can present their expectations. Internships and student assistant jobs are most common for libraries. But indirect communication such as contact with universities or online communication in social networks is also put into practice. The KB, for example, gives insight into their work routine via social media (Instagram). “So different employees, colleagues are making pictures, posting them on the KB Instagram account. (...) It’s quite easy to go to that account and see pictures of people, what they do in daily life, what it produces, projects they work on.”<sup>62</sup> The relation with the founding institution, especially if it offers the relevant degree programmes, is a key element for university libraries as well.

### 5.1.5. Personnel selection and onboarding

Irrespective of the (bureaucratic) process steps of personnel selection and onboarding, libraries have to keep in mind their image as well as their competitors on the labour market. Especially if the process of personnel selection takes too long, candidates may have already decided to work at another institution and the specific library is no longer attractive. As most Dutch university libraries rely on the university’s recruitment department and the processes involved, they may lose promising candidates just because of the duration of the recruiting process. Here, the library has to act as customer of the HR department and demand a revision of processes – as they probably influence e.g. faculties’ recruitment of talents as well.<sup>63</sup> Getting the right candidate for a new position connected with a project is even more challenging. In specific cases, Maastricht University Library can rely on a testing center which aims at “mak[ing] sure that these entrepreneurial skills and non-structured way of working really fits with that person.”<sup>64</sup>

After the candidate has signed the employment contract, the onboarding begins. Dutch libraries consider the cultural background (e.g. with a course called “Dealing with the Dutch”<sup>65</sup>) in order to make it

60 Cf. Association of Universities in the Netherlands (VSNU): Collective labour agreement Dutch universities, 2017, p. 31.

61 E.g. interview conducted with Maria A.M. Heijne and Elsbeth G. Boeker (Library of University of Amsterdam / Hogeschool van Amsterdam), Amsterdam, 11.06.2019

62 Interview conducted with Eric van Driel (KB – National Library of the Netherlands), Den Haag, 21.06.2019.

63 E.g. interview conducted with Frank Nienhuis and Ryanka Hazekamp (University of Groningen Library), Groningen, 25.06.2019.

64 Interview conducted with Ingrid M. Wijk (Maastricht University Library), Maastricht, 19.06.2019.

65 Interview conducted with Frank Nienhuis and Ryanka Hazekamp (University of Groningen Library), Groningen, 25.06.2019.

easier for international new staff members and their families to settle down, or use apps<sup>66</sup> to inform the new employee. Additional instruments in practice are a breakfast with the library director, who then presents the history of the organization,<sup>67</sup> and introducing a buddy, who is not the supervisor of the new employee and who can assist them to become integrated.<sup>68</sup> In addition to this, meetings with the supervisor allow to determine whether the new staff member needs additional support for their task or courses to develop their competencies and skills. After an orientation period of e.g. three months, this communication also includes the setting of individual agreements on performance.<sup>69</sup>

Still, external HR marketing alone will never lead to up-to-date qualified and long-term motivated employees. Rather, the internal conditions must be fitting to ensure the credibility of external HR marketing.<sup>70</sup>

## **5.2. Internal HR marketing**

According to Dirk Lippold, the instruments compensation (cf. chapter 5.1.2.), leadership, assessment, HR development, and layoff can be used for internal HR marketing.<sup>71</sup>

### **5.2.1. Leadership and work culture**

Erasmus University Library has a special working culture in practice: Its core is self-management, which, among other things, was introduced to make the library a “flexible, open, digital and entrepreneurial” partner in the knowledge economy.<sup>72</sup> With reference to Laloux’s “Reinventing organizations”<sup>73</sup>, hierarchies were broken up, even when it comes to staff selection in recruiting.<sup>74</sup> Left with only three layers – the library director, the department heads, and the staff<sup>75</sup> – teams collectively lead themselves. This “working on the basis of trust”<sup>76</sup> increases motivation and commitment: “It’s good, if people bring their entire self and all the talents they have and these may not be library-related but they might be useful in some way.”<sup>77</sup> In everyday working life, this culture is implemented e.g. by means of flex-working, self-responsibility, and freedom regarding further education, open knowledge exchange, and ‘meeting check-ins’.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Interview conducted with Ingrid M. Wijk (Maastricht University Library), Maastricht, 19.06.2019.

<sup>67</sup> Interview conducted with Anja Bastenhof (Utrecht University Library), Utrecht, 18.06.2019.

<sup>68</sup> Interview conducted with Ingrid M. Wijk (Maastricht University Library), Maastricht, 19.06.2019

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Giesen, Birgit: Personalmarketing. Gewinnung und Motivation von Fach- und Führungskräften, in: Thom, Norbert; Giesen, Birgit (eds.): Entwicklungskonzepte und Personalmarketing für den Fach- und Führungsnachwuchs. Mit Fallstudien aus der Personalpraxis, Köln 1998; p. 98.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. Lippold: Personalmanagement im digitalen Wandel, 2019, pp. 211-354.

<sup>72</sup> Otegem, Matthijs van: Working on the basis of trust, Unpublished summary 2019.

<sup>73</sup> Laloux, Frédéric: Reinventing organizations. A guide to creating organizations inspired by the next stage of human consciousness, Brussels 2014.

<sup>74</sup> Interview conducted with Matthijs van Otegem (Erasmus University Library), Rotterdam, 14.06.2019.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Otegem: Working on the basis of trust, 2019.

<sup>77</sup> Interview conducted with Matthijs van Otegem (Erasmus University Library), Rotterdam, 14.06.2019.

<sup>78</sup> Meeting check-ins: “Sometimes there is something on your mind that blocks you from actively participating in the meeting. And it just helps if your colleagues know it. (...) then we can say, ‘OK, can we spend five minutes to help you with it? What’s your worry?’ And this may take five or ten minutes, but the rest of the meeting will be far more effective.” In the interview conducted with Matthijs van Otegem (Erasmus University Library), Rotterdam, 14.06.2019.

Even without ‘reinventing the organization’, nearly all interviewees mentioned that hierarchy levels were reduced to become more agile or at least processes were reorganized with the aim of gaining transparency.<sup>79</sup> The agility and staff’s self-responsibility help to retain especially younger generations of staff.

### 5.2.2. Performance management

As is also common in many German (university) libraries, appraisal interviews for performance management are conducted in Dutch libraries. While some have standardized and highly formalized interviews, at Maastricht they were changed into a ‘goed gesprek’ (good conversation), as “filling in the document [had become] more important than having the right conversation about ‘how are you doing’ and ‘are you happy?’”<sup>80</sup>

### 5.2.3. HR development

HR development focuses on the education and training of the employees, their career path, and the organizational development.<sup>81</sup> Due to the increasing relevance of lifelong learning and a lack of candidates with library background, HR development is very important in Dutch libraries. Therefore, a fixed percentage of the budget is dedicated to HR development.

Based on the individual needs for development, which may be discussed in the appraisal interviews (cf. chapter 5.2.2.), a development track is designed focusing on the individual career path – but taking into account the library’s strategy. HR information systems support HR development and HRM in general. These systems match the library level (e.g. library strategy and HR strategy) and the individual level (individual career path). By combining the strategies and the data, the tools especially help to lead large teams, departments or organizations like the KB.<sup>82</sup> Mostly on-the-job and off-the-job HR development measures are in practice at the surveyed libraries.

#### On-the-job

Some universities have already implemented trainee programs, which include the library. At Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, for example, a traineeship was established, in which the trainees work in one service department (e.g. the library or the IT center). Besides qualifying staff, the programme fosters the network of the university’s service departments, as the trainees collaborate in workshops and projects.<sup>83</sup>

Succession planning is a big issue, as many experts e.g. for metadata management will retire soon (cf. chapter 4.2.). Therefore, libraries bring together experts who will soon retire and their potential successors to avoid losing expert knowledge.<sup>84</sup> But on-the-job training can serve more objectives

79 E.g. interview conducted with Han G. Heijmans (TU Delft Library), Delft, 07.06.2019.

80 Interview conducted with Ingrid M. Wijk (Maastricht University Library), Maastricht, 19.06.2019.

81 Cf. Becker, Manfred: Personalentwicklung. Bildung, Förderung und Organisationsentwicklung in Theorie und Praxis, Stuttgart 2013<sup>4</sup>, pp. 3-5.

82 Interview conducted with Eric van Driel (KB – National Library of the Netherlands), Den Haag, 21.06.2019.

83 Interview conducted with Hilde N. van Wijngaarden (University Library of Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam), Amsterdam, 13.06.2019.

84 E.g. ibid.

than just succession planning. Systematic instruction becomes more important as library tasks and processes occur more often interdivisional. Systematic instruction can also foster interdivisional cooperation and a feeling of belonging.

Internal mobility as promoted by Dutch universities<sup>85</sup> is also put into practice in libraries. Within the library, it often takes the form of job rotation. E.g. at Leiden University Libraries the 'snuffel stage' (sniffing stage) allows employees to become familiar with other departments' daily work.<sup>86</sup> The staff member can even undertake a task e.g. by substituting for a colleague who has fallen sick for a longer time. This 'external' view on the team's or department's processes can be inspirational, too.<sup>87</sup> Even if this kind of job rotation is temporary, the employees gain motivation for their current tasks and responsibilities, or decide to support the respective departments in the future.

### **Off-the-job**

Due to the interdivisional relevance of HR and especially soft skills, the HR department of the university (or, in the case of the KB, of the library itself), plays an import role in offering off-the-job training. Sometimes libraries even derive a library specific training from a training for a different target group. E.g. Maastricht University Library used the 'basic qualification education' for tutors and lecturers as a blueprint for the training of information specialists, who support mainly students in becoming information literate.<sup>88</sup>

Still, as "library basics" do not lose importance, some libraries develop specific programs themselves. "[As] the library basics are meant for everybody that doesn't have a library training and works here,"<sup>89</sup> the development of a programme instead of relying only on individual on-the-job-training is expected to be worth the while.

Dutch libraries participate in networks and organize or take part in conferences because they face similar developments. The network related off-the-job training is based on structural cooperation even on the department head level, "so, regularly, I think every quarter, you get together and meet everybody else and there's a whole agenda of stuff that you talk about then."<sup>90</sup>

"On the one hand libraries develop very fast, but sometimes I look around and I see the libraries not developing at all. So, get inspired by colleagues is not always the best way."<sup>91</sup> This is an important reason why the surveyed libraries often promote external mobility: Staff is allowed to become familiar with processes at another library, at another department of the university, or even in another

<sup>85</sup> E.g. TU Delft: Impact for a better society. TU Delft Strategic Framework 2018-2024, 2018. Online: <<https://www.tudelft.nl/en/about-tu-delft/strategy/tu-delft-strategic-framework-2018-2024/>>, last accessed on 08.02.2020, pp. 36-37.

<sup>86</sup> Interview conducted with Kurt de Belder (Leiden University Libraries), Leiden, 12.06.2019.

<sup>87</sup> E.g. interview conducted with Inge Werner (Utrecht University Library), Utrecht, 18.06.2019.

<sup>88</sup> Interview conducted with Ingrid M. Wijk (Maastricht University Library), Maastricht, 19.06.2019.

<sup>89</sup> Interview conducted with Hilde N. van Wijngaarden (University Library of Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam), Amsterdam, 13.06.2019.

<sup>90</sup> Interview conducted with Barbara J.G.C. Eggels (University Library of Radboud University), Nijmegen, 05.06.2019.

<sup>91</sup> Interview conducted with Han G. Heijmans (TU Delft Library), Delft, 07.06.2019.

sector. Although the temporary new working environment may result in layoff (cf. chapter 5.2.5), the interviewees emphasize the impact on creativity: "And what we've noticed is that especially with the people who have not worked in another library and that is their first time that they are outside of this library and then go to a different environment, they do suddenly start realizing a number of things they haven't realized before. And that has had very positive effects."<sup>92</sup> This external mobility is not only an offer for young and new employees; even employees with a lot of work experience can make use of it.<sup>93</sup> Still, time for improving creativity through off-the-job methods does not necessarily mean that the staff member has to leave the institution temporarily. Some libraries release their employees e.g. for one day a week, which can be used for self-study:<sup>94</sup> "So just go out of the library and think different and then you can pick up things to discuss: This I can apply in the library."<sup>95</sup>

### 5.2.4. Transparency, open communication, and participating in innovation

Especially as libraries are in a transition with regard to new services and revising processes, transparency, open communication, and participation in innovation are needed to keep staff committed to the institution. The links between the past and the future are not that clear, in particular if the daily tasks like metadata management seem to become obsolete – though they are not!<sup>96</sup>

While meetings, meeting minutes, intranets, shared file repositories, wikis, and employee newspapers are still in place in most libraries, several (additional) online or face-to-face instruments are being employed. E.g. the KB enhanced online knowledge exchange by implementing the 'weet fabrik' (knowledge factory).<sup>97</sup> For this not only an intranet including meeting minutes of current status is needed, but staff members must also keep themselves informed even in non-task related fields. Moreover, there is a danger of information overflow.<sup>98</sup> So, personal communication between the different teams or departments and between library management and staff is still relevant. Between 'open doors'<sup>99</sup> and the management's 'new year's talk'<sup>100</sup> several possibilities are implemented in Dutch libraries to increase transparency and ensure that the staff feels adequately informed. Weekly presentations, comparable to coffee lectures, mainly focus on fields of innovation.<sup>101</sup> Many libraries implemented 'a peak in each other's kitchen' to promote information exchange between teams and departments: "So we have a few hours where one department opens up (...). So, that the entire library can come over and see what they are actually doing."<sup>102</sup> Sometimes the method chosen is a mixture of 'a peak in each other's kitchen' and coffee lectures about innovation like the 'brood des kennis' ('a sandwich of knowledge') at Leiden University Libraries: "It's a lunch meeting, takes place every month

<sup>92</sup> Interview conducted with Kurt de Belder (Leiden University Libraries), Leiden, 12.06.2019.

<sup>93</sup> Interview conducted with Anja Bastenhof (Utrecht University Library), Utrecht, 18.06.2019.

<sup>94</sup> E.g. interview conducted with Kurt de Belder (Leiden University Libraries), Leiden, 12.06.2019.

<sup>95</sup> Interview conducted with Han G. Heijmans (TU Delft Library), Delft, 07.06.2019.

<sup>96</sup> E.g. interview conducted with Marianne Renkema (Utrecht University Library), Utrecht, 18.06.2019.

<sup>97</sup> Interview conducted with Eric van Driel (KB – National Library of the Netherlands), Den Haag, 21.06.2019.

<sup>98</sup> E.g. interview conducted with Frank Nienhuis and Ryanka Hazekamp (University of Groningen Library), Groningen, 25.06.2019.

<sup>99</sup> E.g. interview conducted with Hilde N. van Wijngaarden (University Library of Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam), Amsterdam, 13.06.2019.

<sup>100</sup> E.g. interview conducted with Kurt de Belder (Leiden University Libraries), Leiden, 12.06.2019.

<sup>101</sup> E.g. interview conducted with Anja Bastenhof (Utrecht University Library), Utrecht, 18.06.2019.

<sup>102</sup> Interview conducted with Inge Werner (Utrecht University Library), Utrecht, 18.06.2019.

on Thursdays at noon. And we have a group of people who run that, who decide on the topics.<sup>103</sup> These sessions do not only provide the staff with information, but also increase transparency in responsibilities by presenting the persons in charge. Furthermore, they may serve as a platform for exchanging knowledge acquired e.g. at a conference.<sup>104</sup>

In the libraries surveyed, daily informal conversation is supported by messenger tools (e.g. YAMMER<sup>105</sup>). They are especially relevant for large institutions and/or institutions with multiple locations. Moreover, social events increase the sense of belonging of employees.<sup>106</sup>

In periodic management-lead sessions, the library management can present e.g. milestones in developing the library's strategy, interdivisional projects, or the library financials.<sup>107</sup> Even open management meetings are held: "(...) if somebody wants to join the meeting, they're welcome. And so, there are no secrets in that meeting. If somebody thinks their managers are doing very strange things, then they are very welcome to sit in on the meeting and participate. And you don't have to shut your mouth if you are there."<sup>108</sup>

Employees' participation is also key in innovation. Interdivisional innovation management is especially pronounced at Leiden University Libraries. Every employee can submit ideas which will be assessed by staff members who are trained innovation coaches. The innovation coaches discuss feasibility with the submitter and suggest improvements. After several rounds of discussions, the writing of a proposal, and presentations to the innovations board, the idea is felt to be sufficiently well-developed and will finally be presented to the library management. In the 'innovation web' all ideas and the process status are collected.<sup>109</sup>

The explained instruments can only serve as an offer. There will always be some employees who will make use of a lot of them, whereas others will only use task-related information. Nevertheless, transparency, open communication, and the opportunity of participation in innovation have to be applied not only to increase staff commitment and keep knowledge when people retire, but also to provide a holistic service portfolio, as every task depends on other tasks in the interdivisional library process chains.

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103 Interview conducted with Kurt de Belder (Leiden University Libraries), Leiden, 12.06.2019.

104 E.g. interview conducted with Maria A.M. Heijne and Elsbeth G. Boeker (Library of University of Amsterdam / Hogeschool van Amsterdam), Amsterdam, 11.06.2019.

105 For more information about Yammer, cf. <<https://products.office.com/de-de/yammer/yammer-overview>>, last accessed on 08.02.2020. E.g. interview conducted with Kurt de Belder (Leiden University Libraries), Leiden, 12.06.2019.

106 E.g. interview conducted with Kurt de Belder (Leiden University Libraries), Leiden, 12.06.2019.

107 E.g. interview conducted with Barbara J.G.C. Eggels (University Library of Radboud University), Nijmegen, 05.06.2019.

108 Interview conducted with Hilde N. van Wijngaarden (University Library of Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam), Amsterdam, 13.06.2019.

109 Interview conducted with Kurt de Belder (Leiden University Libraries), Leiden, 12.06.2019.

### 5.2.5. Layoff

Dutch libraries do not only promote internal mobility (cf. chapter 5.2.3.). As career paths may be limited, especially when it comes to leading positions, Dutch libraries foster the university libraries' network by encouraging applications for new positions.<sup>110</sup> Even if a former colleague now works for another university department or a faculty, they try to keep in touch to make use of this contact.<sup>111</sup> Some universities already offer career advice to support internal and external mobility.<sup>112</sup>

## 6. (Upcoming) challenges and approaches

The future of HR marketing in libraries is interrelated to the future of libraries in general. As librarians get closer to their customers (e.g. as embedded librarians), research and education skills are getting more important.<sup>113</sup> But how can employees get trained for tasks which their customers cannot even yet envisage? And what sub-challenges arise from this problem? The interviews highlighted four major sub-challenges for libraries with respect to HR:

1. "Can we get everybody, do we keep everybody on board?"<sup>114</sup>; "Don't make the obstacle higher than it should be. Let people get used to it."<sup>115</sup> Libraries need to cope with the heterogenous workforce, e.g. due to different generations, the digitization in perspective of the customers and of the internal processes. Still, they have to keep in mind that each staff member has their own individual development.
2. "The fact that you have a job at a library doesn't mean that you have work, so you should do something useful within the mission we have."<sup>116</sup> Standard library jobs are becoming rare. Libraries need to find ways to support employees motivating and inspiring themselves. They need to confer greater responsibility to employees.
3. Think out of the library box. Libraries need to strengthen their role as one of several service departments. As such, they have to foster networks and cooperation between the staff of the service departments and be open for interdivisional projects and working groups.<sup>117</sup>
4. "Redefine your mission"<sup>118</sup> and "say goodbye to things that are not needed anymore."<sup>119</sup> The service portfolio cannot be expanded more and more, especially against the background of limited resources. Libraries should allow employees to participate in redefining the library mission and strategy. The team needs to have the courage to eliminate services in favour of new customer needs.

110 E.g. interview conducted with Matthijs van Otegem (Erasmus University Library), Rotterdam, 14.06.2019.

111 E.g. interview conducted with Hilde N. van Wijngaarden (University Library of Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam), Amsterdam, 13.06.2019.

112 E.g. interview conducted with Anja Bastenhof (Utrecht University Library), Utrecht, 18.06.2019.

113 Interview conducted with Maria A.M. Heijne and Elsbeth G. Boeker (Library of University of Amsterdam / Hogeschool van Amsterdam), Amsterdam, 11.06.2019.

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118 Interview conducted with Ingrid M. Wijk (Maastricht University Library), Maastricht, 19.06.2019.

119 Ibid.

These challenges can be summarized in one task with respect to HR: Become an attractive employer. As the interviews have shown, Dutch libraries are already well on track.

## 7. Conclusion and outlook

None of the surveyed libraries claims the title 'best employer of the sector', but they all do their best by focusing on their employees in addition to the clients and other stakeholders. According to a library's specific framework (e.g. management style), the HR marketing portfolios differ in focus and in the instruments used, although all aim to prepare staff and, in turn, the library for future challenges. Still, the HR agendas are quite common: Save the knowledge of retiring staff, hire the right people, support staff's creativity and motivation, and offer a pleasant working atmosphere. Cooperation between libraries and universities, services of the university's HR department, and the international perspective (e.g. through conferences) are core elements to achieve this. Hence, even if libraries face an individual framework, the presented HR marketing instruments can be inspirational. As HR marketing becomes more important for libraries as well, this article can serve as an HR marketing catalogue, although it does not cover all possible instruments of HR marketing for libraries. Still, it proves that libraries can learn from each other, regardless of core processes, support processes, or system differences.

So, which strategies and instruments make libraries an attractive employer? The short answer is: Use HR marketing instruments as already implemented in (Dutch) libraries – though rarely under the heading of HR marketing. Therefore, libraries should focus on external HR marketing, especially on the instruments, which have to be based on the specific target group. Regarding internal HR marketing, leadership and work culture, HR development, transparency, open communication and participation as well as layoff are key. By keeping the (upcoming) challenges and the (potential) HR partners in mind, the employer 'library' is well prepared for the future.

Finally, it should be noted that the perspective of the target group of HR marketing, the employees, was almost totally missing in the survey. Future research should examine the efficiency and effectiveness of the presented instruments with respect to the candidates and employees. Moreover, additional analyses about practices all over the world may enrich the HR marketing catalogue.

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