

Head of the Library, Florence, KHI

Application deadline: Sep 30, 2026

Natalie Arrowsmith

The Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz – Max-Planck-Institut (KHI) is seeking a Head of the Library for a permanent position with a preferred start date of November 1st 2027.

We are looking for a committed, forward-thinking person with a PhD in art history or a neighboring discipline, with strong management and communication skills, a collaborative working style and substantial leadership experience, for a position requiring high levels of responsibility and creativity in an internationally outstanding research institute for art history.

As a member of the Institute's leadership team, the Head of the Library contributes to the strategic development of the Institute and its research infrastructure, playing a fundamental role in further strengthening and shaping the KHI Library as a place where research and service for outstanding scholarship interact. The position comprises the management of an open-shelf library (of approximately 350,000 volumes), collection development, acquisitions, cataloging, conservation, and scholarly inquiry; it combines the strategic directing of the KHI Library and data services with day-to-day operational responsibility. The Head of the Library works closely with the Institute's researchers, with its departments and research groups, as well as the Photothek and Digital Humanities Lab, serving as a key point of connection between scholars, guest researchers, the Institute's various units, and long-term research projects.

Founded in 1897 and part of the Max Planck Society since 2002, the KHI understands itself as a laboratory of fundamental research in the histories of art, architecture and photography. Its scholarship is shaped by a transcultural perspective and encompasses a wide historical, methodological, and geographical range, in dialogue with other disciplines. At the KHI historical research is intertwined with a critical engagement in contemporary debates and challenges, including ecology, aesthetics, ethics, urbanization, heritage, geopolitics, migration, practices of care, visual and material culture, global art worlds, the future of museums and archives, as well as codifications, languages and narratives, artificial intelligence and digital transformations.

The KHI Library acts as a hub for the international community of scholars and a place of research, encounters, exchange, and intellectual engagement across generations of scholars. By integrating physical and digital resources, the library promotes awareness of the historical significance of books as instruments of research and knowledge production, while advancing sustainable approaches to digital technologies and artificial intelligence. In addition to its service functions the Library has elaborated a distinctive research profile, addressing both emerging questions in the field of library and information science more broadly as well as regarding its own collections, particularly its rare book holdings, which have been significantly enriched by the unique donation

of the Biblioteca Serlupiana. While based in Florence, the KHI Library is closely related to German library and data infrastructures, among them the kubikat consortium, and takes part in the Max Planck Society's network of libraries as well as in international committees and networks.

The Head of the Library's specific tasks are:

- developing and strengthening the collections – including books, e-books, periodicals, databases, electronic and digital resources – through a research-driven acquisition strategy aligned with the Institute's scholarly agenda;
- overseeing all aspects of the material care and conservation of the collections, with particular attention to rare books and special collections;
- pursuing digitization initiatives and advancing the library's engagement with digital humanities, computational methods, open access, research data management, and artificial intelligence in library infrastructures and research services;
- taking responsibility for data and information security strategies;
- managing and coordinating library staff while fostering a collaborative and efficient working environment;
- developing innovative space-planning strategies that anticipate evolving research practices, new publication formats, and modes of knowledge production, and ensure accessibility, coherence, and suitability for current and future research needs;
- overseeing the further development of the cataloging system in collaboration with the kubikat consortium (Bibliotheca Hertziana – Max-Planck-Institut für Kunstgeschichte, Rome; Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschichte, Munich; Deutsches Forum für Kunstgeschichte, Paris), as well as maintaining and enhancing the shelf classification system;
- participating actively in the intellectual life and organizational concerns of the KHI, as well as taking initiative in research projects;
- securing additional resources through the preparation of grant applications and fundraising initiatives aimed at enhancing collections, staffing, and strategic projects;
- engaging in public-facing initiatives, including on-site and online exhibitions, to enhance the visibility and accessibility of the Library's collections and activities
- organizing and contributing to international conferences, workshops, and scholarly initiatives;
- strengthening the collaboration and role of the KHI Library within German and international library networks and consortia, such as AKMB, DBV, BVB, IFLA;
- fostering collaboration with the network of MPG libraries, and the Max Planck Digital Library in support of shared initiatives and strategic objectives.

Requirements:

- PhD in art history or a neighboring discipline;
- eligibility for academic librarianship in Germany, or willingness to acquire the necessary qualification through a fully funded two-year Master's program;
- leadership experience in a research library, academic institution, or comparable research infrastructure, including responsibility for personnel, budgets, strategic planning, and organizational development;
- native or near-native proficiency in German, and excellent command of English and Italian.

The full-time position is Florence-based and requires full-time commitment; it may not be held con-

currently with other professional appointments.

Subject to personal qualifications, remuneration is based on E 14 TVöD (Bund), with social benefits in line with German federal public service regulations. Alternatively, a contract according to Italian law with an equivalent remuneration will be offered.

The Max Planck Society is committed to equal opportunities and diversity and welcomes applications from all backgrounds, regardless of gender, ethnic origin, disability, or sexual orientation.

Please submit the application, including a cover letter, CV, and a statement describing your vision for the Library (up to 3 pages). The complete application should be uploaded as a single PDF file (max. 5 MB) to the application portal <https://apply.khi.fi.it/> by 30 September 2026, 23:59 (CEST).

For further information, please contact Eva Mußotter and Mandy Richter (mussotter@khi.fi.it; richter@khi.fi.it)

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Reference:

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<<https://arthist.net/archive/53445>>.