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# A headquarters of knowledge

Borders is a large chain of bookstores in the USA. The company recently re-opened its 2,700sqm store in Ann Arbor, Michigan – where it's also headquartered – with a completely new concept. The buzz word for a future-proof way ahead is: multimedia.

▷ **The reason for this repositioning** is the drastic and dynamic change which has been taking place in the book trade in recent years, first and foremost in the face of electronic distribution channels for books and entertainment media.

The mission entrusted to design agency JGA from Southfield in Michigan was to transform the place from a simple book and media store into a "headquarters of knowledge and entertainment". This meant nothing less than doing in the real world what the Internet does in the virtual world: to enable people to "connect with one another, mix, create a neighbourhood of thought" and to enrich the traditional store concept with "new, exciting possibilities".

In this new concept store, customers now find themselves face to face with a multimedia tower out of which various possibilities "well up" as out of a spring. Here, customers can download music and literature, browse for and also burn CDs, do genealogy searches, create their own photo albums and even indulge in some "personal publishing". The multimedia tower is separated from the rest of the store by two low, semi-circular "walls" in the shape of sales displays filled with accessories for new media.

The architects opened up the façade of the Borders building by creating two-storey-high windows. The store has an open-design café with an outdoor area on the pavement. Adjoining the café is a magazine and multimedia department featuring primarily current affairs magazines and media.

The entrance area offers a dense selection of what's-hot books in the "intellectual marketplace"-type atmosphere which is customary in this part of the world. The store layout does not impose any particular navigation path and is structured into intimately enclosed theme departments. These are separated by high or medium-height shelving, the centre of each one featuring a round table laden with the relevant selection of books. Moreover, each department is further subdivided thematically by what are called "focus walls" with marketing and lifestyle graphics, and flat screens. The latter show "inspiring and useful" programmes direct from Borders and its content partners.

The optical centre of the store is a large circular ceiling with track lighting and pendants. Large, round pendants also serve to demarcate the different departments. The comics department has its own "light installation", consisting of suspended, illuminated cubes with illustrations of comic heroes such as Spiderman, or manga heroines.

Rounding out the new Borders is a "community room" – a multifunctional space for book-related and music events, in the cer-



▲ The comics section



▲ Multimedia Tower



▲ Intimately enclosed theme departments

Photos: Fotograf Thomas Klawnumm

tainly not unjustified hope that in the future, a real flesh-and-blood community will come to meet up here.

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