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User services

"I have been visiting the National Library on a more or less regular basis for many years, I appreciate the polite and proper advice and 'service'. Since the books are ready on-time after submitting an electronic order, I can use my time very efficiently when making a trip to the library."

Feedback from Ms W.-R., Bern

The user services product group includes the products *circulation*, *information retrieval* and *information services*. Circulation increased between 2005 and 2006. Extended opening hours for the information hall on Saturday, improved technical infrastructure as well as an expansion of the virtual library all brought improved services to the users throughout the reporting period. Reproduction services and private tours by the SNL continue to be in high demand. The Centre Dürrenmatt Neuchâtel as well as the Patricia Highsmith exhibit conveyed culture to the widest audience.

Circulation

The SNL is used by many college students as a scientific library and therefore tends to have a younger audience. It became even younger last year: The group made up of 20 – 29 year olds grew by 20%. A total of 83,511 documents were loaned from the general collection in 2006, 2.8% more than the previous year. Growth primarily came from printed items (+5%), consultation of freely accessible microfiche declined somewhat (-7%). The new, more comfortable readers, recently made available, may reverse this trend in 2007.

No more than 30 minutes should pass between ordering a document and having it available at the counter. This deadline is met for a large majority of cases, one exception applies to less popular documents, located in an external storage facility; these are available within 24 hours. Inter library loans are in relatively low demand (1,985 loans versus 2,750 in 2005). It is nevertheless an indispensable service, as experience indicates that the National Library is often the only way to get the document. A number of external institutions borrowed objects from the SNL for exhibitions – from the general collection, the SLA, the PDD as well as the CDN. Last year, objects were sent, for example, to Frankfurt, Valladolid and Moscow¹².

Information retrieval

15,246 information enquiries were made in 2006 in the public areas (2005: 15,599). 67% of the workspaces were occupied on average (2005: 64%). Consultant services improved both on-site and online. The information hall has been open Saturdays until 4:00 pm since February 1, 2006 (previously until 2:00 pm); users can access the Internet in the library rooms with their own PC; new microfiche devices allow users to directly produce digital copies from the reader. The reference works in the reading room were also updated.

The public's research abilities have improved. As a consequence, people handle their own simple research queries; conversely, research requiring the assistance of specialists is becoming increasingly more complex. At this point, 20 scientific libraries – including the Bibliothèque de Genève, the Cantonal Library St. Gallen Vadiana, the Bibliothèque centrale of the EPFL Lausanne and the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Library Zurich – are now participating in virtual retrieval about Switzerland. This virtual desk allows any research query to be competently answered within the shortest possible time.

A new service will be offered at the beginning of 2007, developed in 2006: the alerting service. Users will be regularly informed at agreed upon intervals on new arrivals from the user's area of interest based on a personal profile.

Information services

Last year, 3,458 photographs and 113,036 reproductions were produced. The SNL recorded a total of 10,226 visitors to tours, training, events and exhibitions. Roughly the same amount (10,309) visited the Centre Dürrenmatt Neuchâtel. At the SNL, the Patricia Highsmith exhibition took the top honours with about 4,000 visitors, followed by the Berne night of museums with some 3,000 people, held on the topic of *Crime Scene SNL*. Personal visitors paled compared to virtual: 205,603 queries¹³ were registered at the website www.snl.admin.ch in 2006. The commented collection of links, SwissInfoDesk, received 70,652 queries.

The virtual library was expanded in a number of ways. The number of links was increased at the SwissInfoDesk and the quality of the links was once again reviewed. New to the SNL website is a centralized access to regional and cantonal Swiss bibliographies. The offering of digital resources such as databases, newspapers and periodical collections were increased in the public areas of the SNL.

Reproductions were ordered from individuals and from other institutions. Comprehensive work was conducted under contract to the *Historical Lexicon of Switzerland*, the History Museum Bern (for the Einstein exhibition) as well as the website Paul Senn. The Bundeshaus had a very special demand: Federal Councilor Blocher took part in the opening ceremonies for a symposium on the occasion of the 80th anniversary of the entering into force of the Turkish Civil Code at the University of Ankara; the SNL produced digital reproductions of the Swiss and Turkish Civil Codes. External customers were served within the agreed upon timeframe for ordered reproductions in some 99.9 percent of the cases.

Reproductions often represent pre-production services for other SNL products, such as publications or exhibitions. The main exhibition in 2006 was the *Patricia Highsmith* exhibition. During the summer semester, the literary estate of the American author, which is housed and catalogued in the SLA, was made available to a wider public for the first time. It was well visited by the public and received a strong media response – in addition to the more than sixty Swiss media outlets, even from foreign media, including the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, the *Hindustan Times* or the *Changi Express*, the customer magazine for Singapore airport.

SNL tours continue to be popular; practically all aspiring I&D specialists visit the library at least once during their training. As always, foreign groups were also welcomed, for example, Russian librarians or employees of the Korean National Library. The SLA, PDD and CDN offered a rich event programme for people interested in art and literature. More details available on pages 22 (SLA), 24 (PDD) and 25 (CDN).