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Innovation thanks to cooperation

At the Swiss National Library, 2010 was a year of exceptional growth in the collections, innovative services, and ever increasing networking with other institutions.

Every few years, the Swiss National Library (NL) carries out a representative survey of user satisfaction, and the results in 2010 are cause for great satisfaction on the part of the NL itself: on a scale from 1 to 10, the National Library received an excellent average of 8.5. This appreciation shown by our users we feel commits us to maintain our high standards in collections and services. We saw an exceptional growth in our collections in 2010 and launched a series of new services, in both the analogue and digital areas.

Starobinski Library in the SLA

Collections on paper continue to grow: although electronic publishing has increased in volume, there has not been a corresponding decline in conventionally printed titles. Among the new accessions, one in particular deserves special mention: the library of Genevan cultural studies expert Jean Starobinski, whose 40 000 volumes make it one of Switzerland's leading and most comprehensive scholarly book collections. We have the Fondation Hans Wilsdorf to thank for its acquisition and donation to the Swiss Literary Archives (SLA).

Renovation of public areas

“ServicePlus”, a major project launched in 2007 with the aim of further optimising user services, led in 2009 to the creation of a newsletter and a text message information system, and in late 2010 to the inauguration of redesigned public areas. Heavily used areas (such as individual work booths) were enlarged, the open stacks were organised by thematic focus, and building signage was markedly improved.

Events featuring celebrities

As ever, cultural offerings intended to make our collections accessible to a broader public were in great demand, with events attended faithfully by authors and professors in particular, but also by artists. The NL twice boasted Federal Councillor Didier Burkhalter as speaker at an event: the Head of the Federal Department of Home Affairs graced both the celebration held to mark the tenth anniversary of the Centre Dürrenmatt Neuchâtel (CDN) and the ceremony at which the Jean Starobinski Library (see above) was formally presented to the SLA.

Among the personalities whose archives are held by the NL, several celebrated their 80th birthdays in 2010: writer and visual artist Erica Pedretti, author Jörg Steiner, and artists Karl Gerstner and Daniel Spoerri, the two last linked not only by vocation but also by friendship. The NL held events honouring the work of these four “birthday children”, all of whom honoured the NL in their turn by attending in person. The CDN's fourth summer academy, dedicated to the notion of “autofiction”, was enlivened by addresses delivered by Serge Doubrovsky and Urs Widmer.

The NL's exhibitions (*Swiss Appeal – Switzerland in Travel Guides*, at the National Library proper, and the CDN's show devoted to animal motifs in the work of Günter Grass) naturally enjoyed the most attention, from media and public alike.

Electronic collection doubled

The digital world has undergone unmistakable growth in recent times, with an enormous surge in the number of digitally born publications. But although the NL's digital holdings have virtually doubled since 2009, in absolute terms its approximately 10 000 e-publications mean it remains on the small side. This is due in part to the relative youth of this collection, as well as to legal and financial strictures that oblige us to be selective in our electronic acquisitions.

When digitising analogue documents we focus on the history of education, currently an active topic in historical studies. Six periodicals constituting relevant sources are now available online via the *SEALS*³ platform, while some 3000 posters⁴ and a selection of historic books have also been digitised. The latter project was undertaken to contribute to a virtual exhibition held by The European Library, the online platform of Europe's national libraries. Entitled *Reading Europe*, the exhibition features 76 volumes from the NL.⁵

Linking the analogue and digital worlds

Most of the electronic collection – including documents published originally in electronic form as well as digitised books – will be accessible as of spring 2011, when the e-Helvetica platform goes online.⁶ The majority of the associated technical and legal issues were resolved during the year in review, and a large proportion of the collection will be available for online consultation. For reasons of copyright, however, not all documents can be made accessible in this form.

The fact that access to both born digital documents and those digitised from paper publications uses the same channel demonstrates the close interconnection of the analogue and digital spheres. In 2010 Switzerland's libraries saw their online catalogues, which will continue to refer mainly to analogue collections for a long time to come, make their greatest progress since the establishment of information networks: in the spring the *swissbib*⁷ metacatalogue went online, enabling users to search the main catalogues of Swiss universities and the NL simultaneously. In yet another pathbreaking development, *swissbib* allows users to publish their own keywords and reviews online.

Networking with partners

The NL's online library catalogue *Helveticat* now lists all of the approximately 10 000 currently published serial titles and, since the spring of 2010, also offers an additional service: digital reproductions of copyright-free books may be ordered at the touch of a button. The service, known as *eBooks on Demand*, is made possible by the NL's collaboration with a network of European libraries.

Such innovations are proof that new developments are often the fruit of cooperative efforts, and the same is also true of the NL's archives section. At the initiative of the SLA an internationally networked platform for Swiss literary archives has been established under the name *Koop-Litera Schweiz*. Finally, the Prints and Drawings Department (PDD) has its collaboration with the Zurich University of the Arts to thank for important developments in its future collection concept.

In its campaign to ensure the future of Switzerland's libraries, the library commission this year published the *Charter of Swiss Libraries*⁸, which analyses the role of libraries in the information society and sets out guidelines for their future. The paper has been widely discussed by experts and included in the political process.

Marie-Christine Doffey

Director

3 retro.seals.ch

4 www.nb.admin.ch/posters

5 www.theeuropeanlibrary.org/exhibition-reading-europe

6 www.e-helvetica.nb.admin.ch

7 www.swissbib.ch

8 <http://www.nb.admin.ch/org/organisation/03172/03205/index.html?lang=de>