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# "The future is digital. But paper remains."

## The strategy for 2012–2019

The strategy for the 2012–2019 period is the Swiss National Library's (NL) response to new developments in society. At the same time, it signals a continuation of the NL's existing work. The future is digital. But paper remains.

What will the Swiss National Library (NL) look like fifteen years from now? When developing our Strategy 2012–2019<sup>4</sup> we began by formulating a vision for the year 2027. The vision and strategy are the basis for the specific goals of the 2012–2015 performance mandate<sup>5</sup> conferred on us by the Federal Council.

### Vision 2027: "Sources from Switzerland for the world. Anytime, anywhere."

"Internationally, the Swiss National Library (NL) is the most important source of information on Switzerland, its culture and history since 1848. It provides these resources online to researchers around the world and to any other interested persons. A catalogue that meets exacting professional standards guarantees the relevance of the search results, while careful conservation maintains the quality of its documents. Thanks to its services, its innovative capacity and its participation in research projects, the NL enjoys an excellent reputation among specialists. It is a meeting place for students and researchers of the humanities and cultural sciences. Through its events and programmes, it encourages debate on questions relevant to Switzerland, thereby contributing to the development of the national identity."

That is how, today, we see the NL of the future. We believe four social trends are relevant to the institution's development:

- Digital publications now dominate.
- Information is available anytime and everywhere.
- Research in the humanities is international.
- Virtuality increases the need for reality.

### Digital publications now dominate

Forms of publication are becoming increasingly complex. In the last quarter of the 20th century digital devices appeared as information carriers in addition to paper. The quantity of information available digitally is already many times that available on paper, and in future its dominance will increase. This requires adjustments to collection and conservation practices.

The NL will ensure that both analogue and digital Helvetica are collected and conserved for the long term. The same applies to selected archival documents that relate to Swiss culture, which are collected by the Prints and Drawings Department (PDD) and the Swiss Literary Archives (SLA). For categories of documents that the NL is unable to acquire and conserve itself, it will look for partner institutions to carry out this task. We aim to have the necessary agreements in place by 2019.

In so doing, our intention is to extend to other collection domains a practice that has already been tried and tested in certain sub-areas. Under the aegis of the NL's Prints and Drawings Department, a large number of major poster collections in Switzerland are coordinating their collecting activity. Their holdings are combined into a single, virtual Swiss poster collection – the *Swiss Poster Catalogue* (CCSA<sup>6</sup>) – irrespective of where the actual physical objects are located. Swiss sound documents are collected, conserved, catalogued and made available by the Swiss National Sound Archives on the basis of an agreement with the NL.



Marie-Christine Doffey,  
Director

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.nb.admin.ch/org/00779/index.html?lang=en>

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.flag.admin.ch/d/dienstleistungen/doc/SchweizerischeNationalbibliothekNB\\_12-15\\_def\\_d.pdf](http://www.flag.admin.ch/d/dienstleistungen/doc/SchweizerischeNationalbibliothekNB_12-15_def_d.pdf) (in German)

<sup>6</sup> *Catalogue collectif suisse des affiches*

## Information is available anytime and everywhere

Convenience is also becoming increasingly important in information transfer. Information that is not accessible online anytime, anywhere, simply and immediately, tends to be ignored, even if it is of high quality. It is no longer sufficient to offer bibliographic information in electronic form. People looking for information want to have documents delivered to them, even direct to their computer screens.

The NL therefore aims to make documents that are relevant to users as easily accessible as possible from the most widely used devices. This requires further developments in cataloguing, dissemination and infrastructure.

By 2019, our goal is to have revised our cataloguing practices so that they comply with the research behaviour of users on the one hand, and the latest international standards on the other. In addition to the General Collection, a large part of the visual media and the literary archives are to be catalogued online. Additionally, a large proportion of the paper documents that are important to the fields of history, literature, the fine arts and architecture are to be made accessible in digital form. The collection of documents originally published in electronic form is to be made available online, so far as legally possible. The NL's online platforms are to be linked to national and international portals.

These objectives, too, build on what has been achieved in recent years. The international cataloguing standards GND<sup>7</sup> and RDA<sup>8</sup> have already been introduced, or soon will be. A mobile version of *Helveticat* and other databases has been available since 2012.<sup>9</sup> *e-Helveticat* provides access to the electronic collection, except where this is restricted for legal reasons. New newspaper titles become available online each year, thanks to collaboration with libraries and publishers. At least one in each national language has been accessible in digital form since 2012. Private support is enabling rapid progress to be made in cataloguing the publisher's archives acquired by the SLA and the Starobinski library in *HelveticArchives*. Since the end of 2012, this has contained collection level descriptions of all the sub-collections of the PDD, while the important Gugelmann Collection of "Schweizer Kleinmeister" has been catalogued in detail.

The open data strategy which we adopted in 2012 is designed to allow our data to be used for purposes that we are perhaps unable to imagine today. The metadata of the *Helveticat* electronic catalogue have now been made available under Creative Commons License CC0 1.0 and can therefore be used by third parties without restrictions. Data from other databases are also scheduled for release step by step. For privacy and copyright reasons, however, these must be individually assessed before proceeding.

## Research in the humanities is international

National libraries network closely with each other in order to make their documents available to researchers around the globe. Within that network, the NL provides access to sources from Switzerland. We focus on holdings that are important to the study of history, the fine arts, architecture and literature. In addition, via our collections, we are ourselves involved in research projects.

The NL's international academic cooperation in information science is long-established. It manifests itself in, for example, our participation in the European "Multilingual Access to Subjects" (MACS) project, and in research into deacidification.

<sup>7</sup> German National Library *Gemeinsame Normdatei* (Combined authority files)

<sup>8</sup> Resource Description and Access

<sup>9</sup> [mobile.catalogues.en.nb.admin.ch](http://mobile.catalogues.en.nb.admin.ch)

The SLA is much in demand internationally as a research partner in the field of literary studies. It also took part in a number of international conferences during the year in review, for example jointly organising the 35th conference of the International Rilke Society. It is a great honour for the SLA, and a sign of the regard in which its work is held, that its head has been appointed to the board of the Deutsche Schillergesellschaft, the association that runs the *Deutsches Literaturarchiv Marbach* (German Literature Archive).

In the fields of fine art and architecture the Prints and Drawings Department is involved in individual projects including the CTI-funded “4D Sites – Image-based Combination of Spatial Data and Graphical Material”. Headed by the ETH Zurich, this aims to develop a software that combines landscape photography with the virtual landscape space.

Scarcity of resources is severely restricting the scope for collaborations in the field of history. By 2019, we aim to establish how far we can take part in historical research projects.

## Virtuality increases the need for reality

The increasing virtualisation of our world is giving rise to a countervailing need for direct access to the original work, be it a book, manuscript or work of art. The NL has the premises, materials and specialist skills that are required to fulfil this need. For students of and experts in history, literature, the fine arts and architecture, and information and documentation science, it aims to establish itself as a place of meeting and exchange. We also aim to position ourselves among a wider audience as a place where socially and culturally relevant issues are explored.

By 2019 we plan to stage a major exhibition each year, either at our headquarters in Bern or at the Centre Dürrenmatt Neuchâtel. We aim to hold at least four conferences on the humanities and to further develop our existing literary outreach programme while creating new offerings in the fields of art/architecture and history.

The PDD outreach concept that we developed in 2012 is a first step towards expanding our cultural offering. The SLA continued its well-established programme in 2012. Activities aimed at researchers included an edition of the “Berner Taschenbuch” of Rilke’s *Malte*, published to coincide with the Rilke conference in Bern, while the author evenings on the theme of friendship as ever attracted large numbers of non-specialists.

The exhibition *Sapperlot! Swiss Dialects*, which we developed in association with the Phonogram Archive of the University of Zurich, received widespread media attention in all of the country’s language regions. It attracted over 6500 visitors, more than any exhibition at the NL since 1994. Nor was it confined to Bern: some modules were offered via the Internet. The 2012 exhibition therefore looks ahead to the future. Cultural outreach will remain essentially, but not exclusively, analogue. Modules on site and in the Internet will complement and cross-fertilise each other. The motto of our strategy is equally valid the other way round: paper remains. But the future is digital.

Marie-Christine Doffey  
Director