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The National Library in Networks

Within a country, libraries create their own networks to facilitate access to information and knowledge transfer. The networks that national libraries create are global. They preserve printed and online publications worldwide and make them accessible internationally. What role do such networks play for the Swiss National Library (NL)?

If we look ahead, we see that the NL will be organising some half a dozen international congresses over the next two years. I should particularly like to mention four that exemplify the breadth of the topics covered. In 2014, the Réseau francophone numérique³ and Koop-Litera International,⁴ the network of competence for literary estates, will be meeting here in Bern. In spring 2015 the Conference of European National Librarians will be holding its annual meeting at the NL, while in autumn 2016 we will be hosting iPres, the International Conference on Digital Preservation. This profusion is the result of the NL's commitment beyond the institution itself. Switzerland is also a popular venue for international congresses of the library community – and the NL is often invited to organise them.

Working together: how, why, to what end?

We are networked on three levels. The first is through memberships. The NL is a member of numerous associations. Some of them we helped to set up; they include the Swiss Conference of Cantonal Libraries (SKKB) and Koop-Litera Schweiz, the partnership of German-language literary archives in Switzerland. The second level is cooperation on projects. Again, some of these were initiated by the NL. One example is the Swiss Poster Catalogue (CCSA). The third level is cooperation on specialist topics within working groups.

The reasons for our cooperations are as many and varied as the forms they take. Some are idealistic, others pragmatic; often they are a mixture of the two. Our membership of professional associations is at once an affirmation of solidarity and a chance to improve exchange on specialist issues. Our aim is to break down barriers to information, and to that end we support international initiatives in this area. Our participation in international standardisation bodies is motivated by the same objective.

Playing a role in the further development of standards and rules is an important priority for us. The NL operates the ISSN Centre Switzerland. We are a member of the standardisation committee of the German-language library associations and are actively involved in its groups of experts. Within Koop-Litera, we are working to develop standards for archive description. Thanks to our activities in the area of standards, information is easier to find and exchange internationally.

IFLA, BIS and the National Library Commission: national and international coordination

The IFLA describes itself as the “global voice of the library and information profession.” It “represent[s] the interests of library and information services and their users” worldwide. One of its strategic directions for the 2010-2015 period is empowering libraries to “enable their user communities to have equitable access to information”.⁵ The NL is a member of the IFLA Governing Board and the Professional Committee.

The national counterpart to the IFLA is BIS.⁶ We make active use of its training services and also help to design them. The NL is also a member of two working groups. Formed under the aegis of BIS, the Swiss Conference of Cantonal Libraries⁷ deals with issues of library policy and carries out



Marie-Christine Doffey, Director,
photo: Guadalupe Ruiz

³ www.rfnum.org

⁴ www.onb.ac.at/koop-litera/

⁵ International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, www.ifla.org, consulted on 29.1.2014

⁶ Bibliothek Information Schweiz, www.bis.ch

⁷ www.skkb-csbc.ch

cross-institutional projects. We are taking the lead in two of these projects: the cooperative digitisation of newspapers and the development of an application for tablets and smartphones that enables historical postcards of Switzerland to be viewed and sent. The aim of the latter is to show how the collections of national heritage libraries can be exploited using modern technology.

Meanwhile the Swiss National Library Commission⁸ is active at the political level. Despite its name, it does not only represent the interests of the NL; rather, its work is concerned with the national coordination of library policy. At present it is working on a project commissioned by the Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education to establish a joint portal for libraries, archives and museums.

CDNL and CENL: global visions and European realities

The global network of national libraries ensures that the world's literary output is collected and preserved. The conceptual aspects of this task are coordinated by the two international conferences of national library directors, the CENL⁹ for Europe and the CDNL¹⁰ for the world as a whole. The CDNL's long-term vision is "the development of a global distributed digital library – comprehensive, open, seamlessly-connected, and universally accessible on the internet – giving ready access to library materials in the collections of all the national libraries of the world."¹¹ I have been elected as one of two Vice Chairs of the CDNL for the 2012 to 2014 term of office.

I am also Vice Chair of its European counterpart, the CENL, from 2011 to 2015. The CENL has moved further ahead than its global sister organisation with its own project to link together the catalogues and collections of the national libraries. The European Library¹² has been created under the aegis of the CENL with start-up funding from the European Union. The NL was one of its co-founders and is to this day a member of its Management Committee. Originally limited to Western Europe, The European Library has extended its reach to Eastern Europe thanks to financial support from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. The platform now operates a standardised interface for searches in the catalogues of all Europe's national libraries. Integration of leading research libraries began in 2012. The European Library is one of the leading suppliers for Europeana,¹³ the portal to Europe's digitised cultural heritage.

KUB and IIPC: strategies for the digital age

The long-term strategies for Switzerland's academic libraries are being developed by the Conference of Swiss University Libraries (KUB).¹⁴ The NL is linked to the research community via its membership of the KUB and by the research projects of the Swiss Literary Archives (SLA) and the Prints and Drawings Department (PDD). The most striking example in the year under review is the SLA's inclusion in the Marbach-Weimar-Wolfenbüttel research network of literary archives.

The KUB has created e-lib.ch, a portal providing access to the electronically available resources of Swiss libraries, and is involved in the Swiss University Conference's "Academic information: access, processing and storage" programme. This aims, by 2016, to create the tools that teaching staff, researchers and students need for optimum access to and processing of information. Switzerland's future as a centre for research hinges partly on the success of this project.

8 For members of the Commission, see page 21. Activity reports: www.nb.admin.ch/kommission

9 Conference of European National Librarians, www.cenl.org. Its members are the directors of the national libraries of all countries which are members of the Council of Europe.

10 Conference of Directors of National Libraries

11 www.cdnl.info, consulted on 27.1.2014

12 www.theeuropeanlibrary.org

13 www.europeana.eu

14 www.kub-cbu.ch

The future of websites as cultural heritage depends on the success of efforts to archive them for the long term. This is one of the issues being addressed by the International Internet Preservation Consortium (IIPC).¹⁵ The NL holds the Steering Committee Vice Chair in 2014. The fact that we were chosen from among a number of candidates to host the 12th iPres International Conference on Digital Preservation in 2016 is a further sign of the recognition we enjoy in this area.

National Sound Archives, National Film Archive and Memoriav: the audiovisual media

Historically, the audiovisual media occupy a position between the printed and the new electronic media. As a result of technical advances, media that were originally analogue have gone electronic. Sound recordings, including those of the NL, are the responsibility of the National Sound Archives¹⁶ in Lugano, whose remit is of similar breadth to that of the NL. The National Film Archive in Lausanne is responsible for film, while photography is divided among a range of institutions.

Memoriav¹⁷ assists a wide variety of Swiss institutions in maintaining and providing access to their audiovisual cultural heritage in the form of photography, film, sound, video and TV. Providing know-how and networking those involved are just as important as financial support. The NL holds a large collection of audiovisual media and therefore works closely with Memoriav. That is one reason why I have agreed to act as its chair for the years 2012 to 2015.

This brief survey of the national and international networks in which the NL is actively involved is by no means complete. The sections of this Annual Report that follow often refer to projects that we are carrying out in collaboration with third parties.

100 activity reports online

This is the 100th annual report presented by the NL since its foundation in 1895. Some years were combined, for reasons which we have been unable to establish. We have taken this minor anniversary as an opportunity to digitise all the NL's activity reports. They can be found at <http://retro.seals.ch>. This platform for digitised Swiss journals is operated by the ETH Library, with the NL as a partner.

Marie-Christine Doffey,
Director

¹⁵ www.netpreserve.org

¹⁶ www.fonoteca.ch

¹⁷ www.memoriav.ch