

Holding course against the headwind

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Holding course against the headwind

Despite challenging circumstances, the Swiss National Library is moving ahead in its desired direction. A new library management system will be introduced shortly. Digital long-term archiving is on the national agenda. And our *Rilke and Russia* exhibition attracted attention far beyond Switzerland.

2017 was not an easy year. The wind turned in a number of respects. Pressure to make savings, the New Management Model for the Federal Administration⁵ and unscheduled building work significantly curtailed our room for manoeuvre.

How should we respond? We want to remain on course. When the wind changes, that means we have to reset our sails.

We have acted in accordance with three priorities:

- securing the core of our operations,
- embracing the trends of the future,
- reaching out to the public at large.

Securing our operations

In 2017, securing the NL's operations primarily meant ensuring that we can continue to make workstations available to our users. During a review of earthquake resistance, there were indications that part of our historic building no longer complies with current standards. The zone affected had to be closed and shored up, and workstations had to be moved. Planning for renovation work is currently under way.

We also had to deal with the consequences of two water damage events in our stacks. One impacted the technical infrastructure, the other part of the collection. Thanks to the hard work of the staff involved, the damage has since been repaired.

Owing to tighter resources we had to cease providing services that we consider desirable but not absolutely necessary given the changed circumstances. We reduced headcount in conservation and public information, which obliged us to lower standards in both cases. Since 1 January 2018 the NL is closed on Saturdays.

Looking to the future, we have overhauled two fundamental elements that are indispensable to the operations of the NL: the library management system and the agreement with publishers' associations.

On the basis of an invitation to tender in accordance with the WTO standard, the company Ex Libris was awarded the contract for the new library management system, which is scheduled to commence operation at the end of 2018. One innovation is that data are managed in the cloud in the Netherlands. Compliance with Swiss data protection standards is assured even if the data do not stay in Switzerland. Users were informed in writing. The majority of those contacted appreciated this move, and there were only a few negative reactions. We were particularly pleased that as a result of this information, over a thousand new users signed up to receive invitations to our events.

Swiss publishers are among the NL's oldest partners. They make the vast majority of their publications available to us free of charge. In return, we list them in our online catalogue and conserve them. The basis for this arrangement is an agreement dating from 1915 that was renewed in 1961. It was completely revised in 2017. In the version that came into force on 31 January 2018, the publishers' association of Italian-speaking Switzerland (SESI)⁶ is a party to the contract for the first time, alongside the associations of German-speaking (SBVV)⁷ and French-speaking Switzerland (ASDEL).⁸



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Director

⁵ As of 1 January 2017 the New Management Model for the Federal Administration replaced the two previous models: the classic management model and the parallel "management by performance mandate and global budget" model (known by the German acronym "FLAG"), which also applied to the NL from 2006 to 2016.

⁶ Società Editori della Svizzera Italiana

⁷ Schweizer Buchhändler- und Verlegerverband

⁸ Association suisse des Diffuseurs, Editeurs et Libraires

Embracing the trends of the future

For some time now, the key social megatrend has been digitisation. Over the last two decades or so, this has also been reflected in the production and use of publications.

The NL launched its collection of digitally born publications in 2001. They have now been included in the publishers' associations agreement. As a result, publishers offer us their digital publications for archiving, and we then decide whether to include them in the collection. Unlike with printed publishers' output, we can only collect a representative selection of digital production.

Digitally born media also include the audio documents that have been kept by the Swiss National Sound Archives (Fonoteca nazionale svizzera, FN) since 2006. For the last 13 years, the FN has also been digitising all recordings on analogue audio carriers. The digital recordings are generally accessible via audiovisual workstations in partner institutions throughout Switzerland.

Since 2008 we have made a selection of print documents from the NL's collections available online, starting with the *Journal de Genève*.⁹ A first complete literary collection has been available in digital form since 2017, comprising Rainer Maria Rilke's manuscripts from the Swiss Literary Archives.¹⁰

If our digital cultural heritage is not to be lost, it must be securely archived for the long term. At the national *Digital Switzerland* conference on 20 November 2017, the NL therefore submitted the following proposal: "Switzerland must put in place a sustainable solution for the long-term preservation of data and ensure that the data of today can still be used tomorrow." The issue is now being incorporated into the formulation of Swiss data policy, which is being drawn up under the auspices of the Federal Office of Communications.

The NL's approach to the manifold digital forms, applications and uses will be set out in a digital strategy which is currently under development.

Reaching out to the public at large

As a memory institution responsible for conserving a significant part of Switzerland's cultural heritage, the NL wants to extend its reach beyond the scientific community and Switzerland's national borders. We make our outreach offerings available online, at the National Library in Bern, the Centre Dürrenmatt Neuchâtel, the Swiss National Sound Archives in Lugano and at various other locations, in conjunction with partners.

The Swiss Literary Archives teamed up with the German Literature Archive Marbach and the State Literature Museum of the Russian Federation in Moscow for the trinational exhibition *Rilke and Russia*. This confirmed once more that the NL is a sought-after partner for ambitious cross-border projects. In Switzerland, we mounted the exhibition in Bern and in Zurich, together with the Strauhof.

Research and offerings for a wide audience go hand in hand on the website kleinmeister.ch,¹¹ which is generously funded by the Stiftung Graphica Helvetica. Virtual showcases present the Kleinmeister works from our Prints and Drawings Department, categorised by subject.

The exhibition *What Lenin Read. The Revolutionary in the National Library* showed that innovative cultural mediation does not have to be expensive. The presentation, which centred around Lenin's preserved borrowing slips, attracted much media attention and public interest.

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⁹ www.letempsarchives.ch. Further digitised newspapers at www.swisspressarchives.ch

¹⁰ www.e-manuscripta.ch/search/quick?query=rilke and <https://opendata.swiss/de/dataset/handschriften-rainer-maria-rilke>

¹¹ <https://kleinmeister.ch>