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Swiss National Library

Annual Report 1995-1996

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The Swiss National Library in politics

1995 was a very important year for the Swiss National Library (SNL): we celebrated its centenary. Many events were organised, including the CENL meeting in Bern in September 1995 which was one of the high points of the festivities.

During this period, we started our fourth year of reorganisation. At the beginning of 1996, we decided to split our ten main projects into smaller projects in order to have a better view of our activities and a better control of our planning.

In April 1996, the Federal Council (the Swiss government) decided to start a new project for the federal administration to which the SNL belongs. It is intended to introduce New Public Management (NPM) techniques for a number of offices as soon as possible. Already two institutions (Meteorology and Topography) have been chosen and will receive a mandate and a global budget in 1997. Ten to fifteen other institutions will be chosen to start under this new basis at the beginning of 1998. The SNL is preparing a concept formulating the advantages of these new opportunities. As a negative consequence, the Federal Council requires that we reduce the budget by 5% the first year

and by another 5% after four years. We are now evaluating the possibilities to increase our income (representing today 0,04 % of our budget!) to compensate this penalty.

Legislation

A new law for the SNL was introduced in 1993. We are now preparing the "application regulations" giving the details of our way of working. They should be accepted by the Federal Council before the end of 1996.

Building

Work has continued on the construction of underground stacks, which was begun in March 1994. A hole 30 metres deep has been excavated for the planned 70 km of shelving. Excavation was completed in summer 1995, and the first layer of concrete was laid on September 7 1995. The building (7 floors) should be ready in time (summer 1996) enabling us to move our current collections during Spring 1997.

The second phase of construction which aims to adapt our current facilities has been defined and transmitted to the Parliament. A final decision should be taken by the end of 1996. The work could then begin in autumn 1997. The work, costing an estimated sfrs. 35 million, should last three years, i.e. until the middle of the year 2000. All the SNL staff will be disrupted during this time. We plan to keep a maximum of activities and services available to our public, but it is inevitable that there be much inconvenience to all concerned, both staff and users.

Automation, data processing, retroconversion

The first phase of our data conversion is over. The Author file (from the beginning of our collections, say 1848, until today,

around 1,100,000 records) has now been converted. During the first months of 1996 we had to merge the new production (around 90,000 items) entered since October 1993, data of the introduction of our cataloguing system, with the converted data. Substantial efforts to clean up the data were necessary after the merge of the two databases in order to offer a correct access to the end-user.

We intend to introduce further modules of our automation system VTLS by the end of 1996. Two main projects are planned:

First of all, we have to migrate the Swiss Union Catalogue of Periodicals, running at present on the SIBIL system, to VTLS before the end of 1996 because the system in Lausanne should be stopped by that date.

Furthermore, we plan to introduce a fully automated circulation system in order to maintain a good level of services during the transformation of the main building. We will then offer possibilities to the end-users to get their documentation without having to come to the SNL building.

Conservation, Preservation

We have continued our tests of mass deacidification in co-operation with the Swiss Federal Archives. Our most recent tests have been definitively accepted. The equipment we plan to use (same supplier as the Deutsche Bibliothek) will be managed by a private company. However, financial restrictions mean that we do not expect to have an operational system before the end of 1998.

In the audiovisual field, our awareness campaign entitled "A country is losing its memory" has continued. An association composed of institutions which are involved in audiovisual conservation has been formed on December 1, 1995. The founders of this association, called MEMORIAV, are the Swiss Broadcasting Corporation, the National Sound Archives, the Swiss Film Archives, the Federal Office for Communications, the Federal Archives and the SNL. The aim of this association is to

create a network of skills in the country in order to improve the dramatic situation we know today, losing every day an immense amount of important material. Unfortunately, the difficulties we have with the federal budget prevent us from obtaining sufficient resources to solve this severe problem.

Public relations

Numerous exhibitions and events have taken place at the SNL during the centenary year. Our printed annual report gives more details about these events.

Co-operation on the national level

After an unenthusiastic reaction of the Swiss German university libraries to our national network project, most of them are reconsidering their position and are now ready to co-operate. Perspectives of important changes are taking place at the library of the Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich. The possible decision to stop developing their own system and to acquire a commercial solution may provide us with new possibilities to co-operate.

In parallel, we are still working on a first step of sharing data. The two largest library networks in the country have agreed to co-operate with the Swiss National Library to create a CD-ROM using data from these different sources. This product, made with the help of the British Library and a commercial company, should be ready by the end of 1996.

In addition, the Swiss Library Association has started a project which aims to re-evaluate the principles on which cataloguing and indexing are based. The first results from this working group, in which the SNL is taking an active part, should be known before the end of the year.

Co-operation on the international level

The Swiss National Library has remained active in COBRA.

A very important step was made in 1995 by signing an agreement with RLG, California. The SNL is now member of the group and exchanges data with it. The other libraries of the country are taking advantage of this membership since they can receive most of the RLG's services via the SNL.

We are taking an active part in the EU project CANAL/LS. As part of the project, we have carried out a study on multilingual requirements of library users in co-operation with the Cantonal and University Library of Fribourg.

We are improving our ISSN centre for Switzerland located at the SNL. We maintain regular contacts with the ISSN centre in Paris.