

Contributing to the European Digital Library Vision

The European Digital Library, a common multilingual access point to Europe's cultural heritage, has moved a step closer to becoming a reality after the Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF) announced the development of their new portal Europeana. [CENL](#), the Conference of European National Librarians, warmly welcomes and gratefully acknowledges this initiative of one of its founding members as a contribution to the European Digital Library. The BnF not only raised the money to digitise and add 80-100,000 items per year to their Gallica collection, but also created an example of what the future European Digital Library might be.

In parallel, CENL has taken the initiative to set up a foundation - together with other cultural heritage bodies in Europe - to anchor the European Digital Library legally and give it a stronger capacity to act.

Elisabeth Niggemann, Director General of the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek and Chair of CENL, emphasises the need to build on what has already been achieved. She adds: "We also have to deepen the existing collaboration with colleagues from archives and museums in order to arrive at a European Digital Library that encompasses material from different types of cultural institutions across Europe".

The EU is supporting the process towards the European Digital Library with a set of projects centring on [The European Library](#). This portal, created by the national libraries that are members of CENL and hosted by the Koninklijke Bibliotheek in the Netherlands <http://www.cenl.org/>, is seen as one of the major building blocks of a European Digital Library. Version 2.0 of its portal is scheduled for release at the end of 2007. The European Digital Library will also benefit from the work carried out through other European projects and initiatives such as Michael+, describing and linking digital collections of museums, libraries and archives from different Member States.

CENL underlines the fact that mass digitisation is an urgent need as the actual digitised objects and items contained in The European Library are only a drop in the ocean of material held in the national libraries of the EU. Several national libraries are responsible for national digitisation plans and are persuading their governments to help fund them as well as looking towards private money to help. A variety of national digitisation plans and programmes are being put in place such as those of the Polish National Library and the Dutch Royal Library. In addition several public private initiatives, such as that of the British Library and Microsoft, have been launched to increase the amount of digitised material available to the user. To try to ensure that European culture and heritage is fully represented in the proposed European Digital Library CENL has set up a Content Working Group, developing a strategy for digitisation priorities across the national libraries.

Initiatives like Europeana are a most welcome contribution towards CENL's aim to make the vision of the European Digital Library based on The European Library more and more a reality.

CENL - Elisabeth Niggemann - 22.03.07

CENL: Conference of European National Librarians, www.cenl.org

The European Library: www.theeuropeanlibrary.org

EDLproject: www.edlproject.eu
