

CENL Strategic Plan 2018-2022

The role of a national library in a changing world

CENL's Vision

Europe's national libraries are world-leading memory institutions, playing important roles in the intellectual, educational, cultural, social and economic development of the continent, countries and communities they serve.

Together we form a strong professional community, promoting our common purposes and shared values of collaboration and partnership.

CENL's Mission

CENL's mission is to advance the cause of Europe's national libraries, working better together and achieving more than we can do alone.

To engage with library audiences and understand need

- CENL will explore the changing environment for library users and wider audiences, to understand the impact of changing collections, spaces and technologies and to help CENL members embed this knowledge into their own strategies

To build capacity and professional expertise in CENL members

- CENL will support its members to grow as organisations, to develop innovative and relevant new services and to develop highly skilled staff.
- CENL will lead debate on the changing role of national libraries in a rapidly changing world. We will build a strong network of experts across a wide range of professional areas to share knowledge, experiences and to learn from each other.

To advocate for CENL members and libraries in general

- CENL will be the leading advocate at European level for national libraries.
- CENL will work to promote the interests of CENL member libraries and to support activities at European and national levels which will help all libraries deliver better services to their communities.
- CENL will develop strategic partnerships to promote its members' interests with organisations which share its vision and purposes

How is our environment changing?

CENL members have seen a lot of change since the start of our last strategic plan in 2015. Our collections remain at the heart of everything we do, but the core purposes of building collections, preserving them in perpetuity and offering effective access require increasing levels of investment, innovation and efficiency.

Many members are seeking to develop the role they play in civic society and to engage with wider public audiences beyond traditional researchers and students. This has stimulated a broad interest in the redesign and repurposing of physical spaces, as well as generating ideas for innovation in services and public programmes. Many members are developing new relationships – formally and informally – with university libraries, with public libraries, with museums and archives, enabling them to take on broader responsibilities and new purposes. While digital transformation continues to gather pace and have major impact across all aspects of the work of national libraries, many members now have mature national digital strategies in which they play a leading role.

CENL has responded to these changes by adapting our programme of work and priorities to better meet members' needs. In closing the TEL service, we have recognised that the complexity and speed of change in the digital world requires more flexibility and agility than an organisation like CENL can achieve. Instead of being the sole owner of a digital service infrastructure, we have changed our focus to enable and support members to succeed in delivering national plans and objectives instead.

By investing in our Secretariat, CENL has been able to communicate more and to better understand members' needs. This has led to strengthening the programmes to support skills development and also to identify major topics of common interest, including space and environmental planning, economic sustainability and public engagement.

The strategic plan for 2018-2022 builds on these developments and aims to strengthen and support CENL members more in these priority areas.

- Support national libraries to increase their impact and to be strong organisations
- Develop national library services
- Develop as memory institutions
- Strengthen CENL as a community

Priority areas for action 2018 - 2022

1. Supporting national libraries to increase their impact and to be strong organisations

- We will identify the priority areas for skills development and knowledge exchange across our members and invest in appropriate training and development opportunities
- We will develop our grant giving and bursary programmes to enable members to identify and shape their own priority areas for development
- We will offer relevant and interesting opportunities for discussion and debate on key issues through our annual conference and other events
- We will develop CENL policy on advocacy and lobbying on behalf of CENL members in relation to wider library and information society issues
- We will continue to identify and partner, where appropriate, with other relevant organisations working to promote the impact and strength of libraries and cultural organisations, including international organisations such as UNESCO, IFLA or CDNL and European organisations such as LIBER, CERL and EBLIDA.
- We will support members seeking to diversify their funding sources, through sharing experience and information on opportunities for philanthropic, research funded or commercial developments.

2. Developing our services

- We will support CENL members as they develop innovative services to meet the evolving needs of a wide range of audiences, including the general public, learners, researchers and cultural visitors.
- We will support service development across the CENL membership by surveying members' service strategies and developing opportunities for CENL members to share knowledge and expertise
- We will explore innovative use and design of physical spaces to facilitate new services and to engage diverse audiences
- We will share best practice on development of effective cultural programmes of exhibitions and events, both physical and digital, to improve access to European cultural heritage.

3. Developing as memory institutions

- We will share information, identify best practice and support members to improve professional standards of stewardship and management of our collections in all formats
- We will review current legal deposit practices across CENL members to update our knowledge and understanding of the scale and comprehensiveness of national level collecting policies across Europe
- We will support members in their development of digital collections and access services, by supporting skills exchange and collaboration in areas such as mass digitisation of heritage collections, use of innovative technologies, copyright reform and digital rights management
- We will encourage and facilitate knowledge-sharing in relation to legislative and regulatory changes affecting national library services and collections, engaging as appropriate with other stakeholders in the information sector to explore areas of mutual benefit

4. Strengthen CENL as a community organisation

- We will keep our governance models, our programme of work and ways of working under review to ensure CENL works effectively for all its members
- We will continue to develop the role of the Secretariat as a dedicated professional service, implementing the strategy to help all members to achieve their own goals
- We will ensure CENL subgroups work effectively by reviewing their remit and terms of reference
- We will update and improve member contacts to ensure we communicate effectively with members and also strengthen the peer to peer network
- We will develop an annual communications and consultation plan each year to ensure that all members are able to participate effectively in decision making
- We will develop the CENL website to ensure it is an effective information source for members and anyone seeking information on Europe's national libraries
- We will develop plans to use social media and other media channels in support of CENL collectively and of individual member libraries