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German National Library

Annual Report 2015

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In their role as service providers, libraries furnish users with media which are described by means of structured data, so-called metadata. Previously they provided catalogues which users could consult to search for the books and journals available in the library. In today's online catalogues it is important to differentiate more clearly between such catalogue data and other metadata containing important information about the media—technical data, for example, that describe the state of preservation of a medium or the format specifications of digital publications.

It is no longer necessary to enter a library in order to use the meta-data about the media it holds. Metadata are a self-evident part of the World Wide Web; they can be accessed from anywhere at any time. Since 2015 all the metadata that describe the holdings of the German National Library have not only been globally accessible, they can now also be used free of charge and under the "Creative Commons Zero" (CC0) license, i.e. without restriction. This represents the culmination of a process which started in 2012. Following the release of the data of the Integrated Authority File of the German National Library and of the German networks including their associated libraries in July 2015, all bibliographic data were also made freely available for use as of October 2015.

The purpose of making metadata freely accessible and of expressly encouraging all forms of re-utilisation is to promote the development of new search system applications. The number of registered data subscribers has increased since then: many smaller libraries and companies such as library software providers signed up for the first time in 2015 to use the services of the German National Library. A further trend has also emerged: since the authority data have become available free of charge, interest has been shown not only by libraries, but also by increasing numbers of archives and museums. We will continue to monitor the effects of this.

Authority data such as classic bibliographic metadata (catalogue data) are no longer incorporated exclusively in the structure of special data formats, they are also created based on fixed codes. Metadata quality is still achieved through code compliance and cataloguing depth but also through the number of search access points. "Tidy" catalogues and redundancy-free databases are (still) most likely to be obtained by the creation of verified and standardised metadata based on established sets of rules. 2015 was important in the history of the catalogue because it was the

year in which the most important milestone of the RDA project was reached: the introduction of the RDA (Resource Description and Access) cataloguing standard in all German-speaking networks, associated libraries and in the German National Library. As of 2016 librarians in the German-speaking countries are now generating metadata according to the same rules as their colleagues in the United States, Canada, United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand and some other countries outside the Anglo-American world. They have all adopted the new international RDA cataloguing code and the corresponding data format MARC 21. At long last it is now a simple process to exchange and re-use metadata with minimal editing. A long cherished dream has come true!

But quality costs time and therefore money. Whether the German National Library can maintain the RDA development depth agreed between the German-speaking partners or whether it will have to make cuts will soon become apparent. This makes it all the more urgent to identify which metadata are actually used by whom and for what purpose. Accordingly, the task of improving procedures for extracting machine-readable metadata from digital publications or digital parts of publications which yield satisfactory search results for users is growing in importance. This will finally allow libraries to catalogue types of media which up to now have often been neglected in the catalogues: articles in journals, newspapers or conference proceedings and other non-independent parts of publications such as individual poems in anthologies, tracks on sound recordings or individual websites on the Internet.

Bearing this goal in mind, the German National Library was forced to question the role of cataloguing codes. Was it worth introducing RDA? And more fundamentally: who cares about metadata when there are search engines that can evaluate the media themselves and obtain reasonable search results? Will the introduction of RDA coincide with the end of the tradition of experts' generating and maintaining catalogues in libraries?

The answer is: no, this is still some way off. Software programs merely carry out a function and, from the perspective of the German National Library, metadata generated by people on the basis of cataloguing codes represent the ideal model which machine-generated metadata should aspire to. We are actively involved in projects, awarding development contracts, carrying out quality checks and optimising our processes in order to achieve this.

One of the issues that must now be addressed is the compatibility of data generated in different ways. A further urgent question is that of our data infrastructures. Are our catalogue database systems, most of which have been in use for well over 20 years, capable of handling such heterogeneity? Can the authority data on persons, titles, corporate bodies, geographic entities and topical terms coexist with database entries which have been machine-generated, i.e. not intellectually checked by qualified library experts? Where do we want to keep data which have been created by academics or by interested and dedicated lay people (Wikipedia represents a good example here)? How, when or why are they to be incorporated in the standardisation process? Which usage scenarios do we view as more important than others? Are authority data suitable as nodes in the Semantic Web? Where should we invest our energies? Who should train the experts who are needed to answer these questions? Stimulating questions, exciting times, good prospects!

Whatever happens in the next few years, 2015 was the year of metadata! They are being created—and used—in large quantities, as witnessed by the rising level of catalogue usage.

But 2015 was, of course, more than just that! Read for yourself all that has happened in the last twelve months. If no effort is made to convey the importance of the treasures and the value they hold, metadata and the media they describe are ultimately worthless: it is not easy to attract attention in a society that is so rich in opportunities and possibilities.

Libraries in Germany are guarantors of freedom of expression, pluralism and democracy, educational opportunity, personal careers, and much more. But they need to advertise this fact

themselves. They must constantly be willing to demonstrate and prove it, and not simply rely on the society they serve coming to this realisation by itself.

The German National Library trusts that this 2015 Annual Report will provide interesting reading and hopes to see creative and strong partnerships for the many tasks that it will continue to perform— successfully—in the coming years.

Reports

Report of the Acquisitions and Cataloguing domain

Introduction of the new “Resource Description and Access (RDA)” standard for bibliographic data was the main topic in Acquisitions and Cataloguing in 2015. This culminated in the creation of the first bibliographic record using RDA on October 1. This in turn signalled the start of the comprehensive introductory and training phase for all employees, conducted during ongoing operations. Library operations presented numerous challenges again in 2015. Roughly 525,000 physical media units and 612,000 online publications were processed by the library, expanding both the collection and the catalogue. The two millionth online publication was acquired in September. The number of newspapers collected in PDF format (with original layout) grew to 1,200 titles, resulting in approximately 350,000 issues per year. The selective web harvesting service of the German National Library had processed some 1,700 websites by the end of 2015 and taken more than 8,200 snapshots. There was also a significant increase in the numbers of digital audio books which rose to 8,500 titles. The cooperation with regional legal deposit libraries in the “Regional window” project is intended to yield new synergies in the use of the e-paper collection. In the “ISSN-Integration” project, workflows which are currently separate are being merged and optimised using the German Union Catalogue of Serials (ZDB). Automatic indexing went into regular operation following a successful practice test with selected online publications. The automatic issue of short DDC notations to online medical publications also began in 2015. All institutions contributing to the RDA project have begun to introduce the new standard. The training phase made use of cooperatively developed, uniform materials. Agreements were made on the cataloguing of special materials such as sheet music, maps and rare materials. New ongoing tasks have arisen as the result of the library’s supervision of the code and its involvement in RDA committees. The set of standard elements was agreed, representing a common basis for cataloguing in German-speaking countries.

Report of the User Services and Preservation domain

The Preservation section was assigned to the User Services and Preservation domain on October 1. This now takes care of tasks relating to holdings, media use services and the distribution of authority and bibliographic data, as well as tasks related to the long-term preservation of physical works and their digitisation. The number of times digital publications were accessed rose by a further eight percent in 2015, whereas the ordering and provision of physical media fell by 15 percent. This saw the trend of previous years continue. The “Digitisation of damaged media” project digitised around 235,000 pages from nearly 7,500 books and journals. Finally, four continuation records which were at risk of disintegration were digitised, involving the processing of some 1.24 million pages. The out-of-commerce works licensing service (VW-LiS) went into operation in July. The pilot phase of the “Orphan Works” project started. In the field of catalogue enrichment, the figure of 1.3 million digitised tables of contents was surpassed. The number of times the German National Library catalogue was accessed increased by 13 per cent compared to 2014. 97 improvements and bug fixes were undertaken to the portal in 2015. Following the change

of the business model for the use of data services, all bibliographic data of the German National Library as well as the authority data of the Integrated Authority File have been available since July 1 for free re-use under “Creative Commons Zero” (CC0) license. The number of users has multiplied since then. 7,300 metres of new physical media publications were acquired. In 2015, 13 tonnes of library holdings were sent for mass deacidification and the contents of 3,400 metres of book shelves were cleaned. Quality assurance measures involved taking 7,800 surface pH measurements, 100 bioluminescence measurements and 25 samples. Preservation treatment was conducted on 4,534 books, 16,612 individual pages and 38 maps. The German Museum of Books and Writing (DBSM) fulfilled its role as a site of non-formal learning by presenting 17 different topics. 300 items were added to the virtual “Arts in Exile” exhibition. The National Library of Israel became a new network partner. The exhibitions and events of the German Museum of Books and Writing and the German Exile Archive 1933–1945 attracted 20,000 visitors, and their online exhibitions a further 232,000.

Report of the Information Infrastructure domain

One of the main priorities was the creation of target plans for a future-oriented software system landscape for bibliographic systems and data services. Adjustments were made to 50 aspects of the internal format and services in connection with the RDA changeover. The scalability of the digital delivery processes was further improved and new procedures were developed for journal articles. The preservation repository received the Data Seal of Approval.

Report of the Central Administration domain

The new Rules of Procedure of the German National Library came into force on 1 August; the purpose of these is to create more transparency in the library’s business routines and responsibilities. Over 70 percent of the 450 tariff-based jobs were re-evaluated; 160 of these were given a higher rating. The budget volume was EUR 54.4 million. The German Federal Network Agency assumed responsibility for managing business travel on 1 November. Central purchasing made 1,321 procurements; the post room handled 138,000 letters and around 45,000 packages containing media acquisitions. The modernisation of the exhibition rooms in Frankfurt was completed and 166 events were held in total at both locations.

Highlights

Introducing the new cataloguing standard RDA

On 1 October 2015, the German National Library entered its first data record based on the new international “Resource Description and Access” (RDA) standard. This brought the process—lasting several years and involving 16 partners in Germany, Austria and Switzerland—to a successful conclusion. The standard promises improved search capabilities and more comprehensive results for users, e.g. including different languages and types of media: the main focus of the approach is on forming clusters of works, thereby bundling all manifestations of a particular topic. The transition to an internationally widespread and jointly developed cataloguing code offers greatly improved possibilities for the exchange of data. The data of the German National Library are freely available for re-use, meaning that they can be enriched with further information anywhere in the world. The German National Library prepared for the transition by providing broad-based training to its employees. The training materials have been drawn up in collaboration with the project partners and deposited in the RDA-Info-Wiki. This means that all stakeholders can access the latest

version at any time, representing an important prerequisite for the success of the many training courses and the eventual daily practice. Special materials such as sheet music or rare materials can also be catalogued using the new standard. The German National Library carries international responsibility for the further development of the RDA standard and has represented the European libraries on the international RDA Steering Committee (RSC) since 2016.

German-Israeli Cooperation Project

The Federal Republic of Germany and Israel have decided to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries by setting up a cooperative project aimed at making their common cultural heritage accessible to a wider audience. The German National Library and the National Library of Israel (NLI) were both commissioned to digitise Hebrew texts. This has been carried out since February 2015 in three subprojects: in its "Books in Hebrew Letters" project the National Library of Israel is digitising approximately 3,000 books from its own holdings. These are publications written in German, Yiddish and Hebrew and in Hebrew characters. In the second part of the project, entitled "Hebrew Manuscripts", the participating German libraries are digitising more than 400 medieval and early modern manuscripts from their holdings and making them available to the NLI. In the third part of the project, the NLI is to provide a total of 60 outstanding digitised texts to the German National Library by autumn 2017 for the virtual Arts in Exile exhibition.

German Music Archive

Rare and valuable sound recordings such as wax cylinders and shellac records from the early days of sound recording are digitised in the recording studio of the German Music Archive (DMA) in Leipzig. This benefits, for example, the Europeana Sounds project which has been part of the extension to Europeana, Europe's digital library, since 2008. By 2017, the German Music Archive will have contributed 500 recordings to the project. The permanent preservation of all new releases continued in 2015. By the end of the year, 104,463 CDs had been digitally copied. At the end of 2015 the total number of migrated holdings had risen to 454,060. The Archive also contributed to the cultural life of Leipzig as one of the hosts of the Leipzig "Nacht der Hausmusik" event.

Key facts and figures

644,7 full time equivalents
total budget: 50.333.000
total holdings: 30.862.381 items
new acquisitions: 1.138.482 items
users per day: 666
orders per day: 1.909