

## ANNUAL REPORT TO CENL 2019

Name of country: **France**

Name of library or equivalent national-level organisation:

**Bibliothèque nationale de France**

Name of Chief Executive: **Laurence Engel, President**

Name of contact person for international matters:

**Isabelle Nyffenegger, Head of International Engagement**

Mailing address: **Quai François-Mauriac / 75706 Paris Cedex 13 / FRANCE**

Telephone: **+ 33 1 53 79 59 59** Fax: **+ 33 1 53 79 48 49**

Web address of the Library: <http://www.bnf.fr/>

Email address for contacting the library:

[laurence.engel@bnf.fr](mailto:laurence.engel@bnf.fr); [isabelle.nyffenegger@bnf.fr](mailto:isabelle.nyffenegger@bnf.fr)

The National Library of France's Annual Report provides a review of the institution's fulfilment of its major statutory missions and their translation into long-term objectives, high-priority initiatives and projects, as set out in its objectives and performance contract for the period 2017 – 2021. It highlights achievements resulting from the collective efforts of its staff who, on a daily basis, demonstrate their commitment to and passion for their work and for public service in their relations with both users and collections.

The BnF manages and disseminates the heritage built up throughout its history and continues to provide input by maintaining strong links with current events and contemporary art, as witnessed this year, for example, by the exhibition *Make it New. Conversations with Medieval Art: carte blanche to Jan Dibbets*. A lively and creative institution, the BnF is constantly finding new ways to approach its audiences: the reading aloud of manuscripts in the Manuscript Room, the development of educational content catering for autonomous groups, a tool for creating digital comic books, audiovisual design studios, etc. Its links to current events are evident in its cultural and educational programmes and in its documentary policy which is dedicated to capturing contemporary political, social and cultural developments. The BnF has thus introduced specific Internet archiving collections in addition to its regular current events collections, in order to archive ephemeral content around, for example, the Yellow vests movement in 2018 and 2019 and the Notre-Dame cathedral fire.

Such current events can have significant effects on the operations and activities of the BnF. In December 2019, the national social movement for pension reform led to a sharp drop in attendance in reading rooms and the cancellation of a number of lectures and group visits. The pandemic of 2020 is, as for the rest of the country's cultural institutions and sectors, an exceptionally long and intense period of crisis which the BnF must face and accommodate.

## Audiences first or a renewed relationship

The changing context of usage has driven the institution to continue to strengthen its outreach to its audiences. The key objective of its audience policy is to consolidate its links with its natural audiences – academic and school audiences – in addition to diversifying them, and to further disseminate its collections and services, both by means of digital technology and by varying the forms in which works are exhibited. As a result of this proactive initiative, and despite the disruptions at the end of the year, attendance rates for the Library in 2019 have been encouraging. In terms of physical attendance, total attendance across all the BnF's sites, including attendance in reading rooms, at exhibitions, events and for educational activities and tours, was approximately 1.3 million visitors received. The Library's range of online services recorded nearly 41 million visits.

Attendance measured in the reading spaces stands at 920,000 visits, a slight decrease over the full year compared to 2018 (-0.6%); however it was 3% higher at the end of November. The number of active readers (i.e. cardholders who have visited a reading room at least once) continues to rise (+4%). Despite the loss of business in December, these results for 2019 exceed the annual targets of the institution's

objectives and performance contract.

In accordance with the institution's commitment to quality provision, its admissions and registration processes were reviewed in 2019; this included a redistribution of reception desks to reduce the number of procedures for visitors, the elimination of the accreditation maintenance requirement for the research library's "de jure" readers — which was replaced by a maintenance/advice service open to all — and the introduction of an online ticket and booking interface for exhibitions, which allowed the BnF to anticipate and manage the flow of visitors during the Tolkien exhibition.

Exhibition attendance in 2019 exceeded 330,000 visits on the BnF's websites (+23%), and were in the region of 400,000 for off-site exhibitions in which it takes an active part. The Tolkien *Exhibition Journey to Middle-Earth*, from 21 October 2019 to 16 February 2020, met with extraordinary public success, with over 130,000 visitors, the highest number ever attained throughout the history of the BnF. Off-site, the institution pursued its "In the collections of the BnF" cycle, which allows visitors to explore and share its wealth of heritage: outstanding items from its collections were exhibited at a number of cultural institutions within the region; these were selected for their symbolic value but also for their connections to local collections or to the themes of festivals or events. More broadly, the BnF has made loans to 187 exhibitions, both within France and abroad, some of which included a number of the BnF's works. Thanks to these loans, over 2 million visitors have had access to the BnF's collections.

Despite a number of cancellations in December, attendance at educational activities has also increased sharply, exceeding the annual target. Within the region, these have mainly been introduced in the form of training for mediators in artistic and cultural education.

For their part, its online audience and the visibility of its online collections has never been greater. The ergonomic, functional and editorial overhaul of the [bnf.fr](http://bnf.fr) website was completed in early 2019, and now allows simplified navigation and optimal display, regardless of the type of viewing screen. Gallica, the digital library, received nearly 15.5 million visits. By the end of 2019, it was providing access to 7 million documents, almost 6 million of which could be viewed remotely and a million copyrighted digitised documents accessible solely in its research rooms. The creation and publication of digital content is also the responsibility of its subsidiary, BnF-Partenariats (BNF-Partnerships), which recorded 6.3 million visits in 2019 to RetroNews, the BnF's press website, and 40 million listeners to its Sound Collection on music platforms. To facilitate the free reuse of its content, the BnF also offers the recovery of its images via an IIF (International Image Interoperability Framework) API. In 2019, 190 million image accesses were recorded (110 in 2018).

## A continued focus on the management of its collections

Building on the strategic orientations of its documentary charter and its digitisation charter, the BnF is committed to implementing a comprehensive documentary policy, addressing the physical and digital collections in a consistent manner. A long-term digitisation programme, based on the priorities defined in its charter, is being implemented: in 2019, including current and retrospective OCR processing operations, almost 30 million pages were produced.

2019 saw the continuation of various projects concerned with trialling the legal deposit of digital documents. The first digital books and music albums have already been made available. These first registrations, though few in number, have above all made it possible to test the entire chain, from registration, description, and archiving to making the documents available to users. Such trial registrations will increase sharply in number with the publication of legislation, under preparation at the Ministry of Culture, making it obligatory to register all digital copies. This issue of the continuity of the collections, fundamental for the BnF, is shared with the other institutions responsible for legal deposit missions. Therefore, in 2019, a project to pool the collection and conservation of audiovisual and cinematographic collections in France was jointly submitted to the Public Action Transformation Fund

(Fonds de transformation de l'action publique) by the BnF and the National Centre for Cinema and the Animated Image (Centre national du cinéma et de l'image animée). The project was selected and is to receive 2,170,000 euros in financial assistance.

Within the context of a complete redefinition of cataloguing standards on an international scale, the BnF has, for a number of years, been engaged in a major long-term project to completely overhaul its catalogue production application. Investigations were continued in 2019 around two separate projects: Tying Together Works, Expressions, Events and Items (NOEMI), which entails redesigning the BnF's cataloguing tool, and the National Entity File (FNE) project, the objective of which is to pool the production and dissemination of authority data produced by French libraries, primarily the BnF and the Bibliographic Agency for Higher Education (ABES) network.

The preservation of the collections, both physical and digital, is one of the institution's major challenges for current and future periods. The storage areas are fast reaching saturation point and the institution is investigating solutions to expand its storage facilities in the medium and long term. The Library is working on defining a comprehensive plan for the layout and dynamic management of its collections that is fully integrated into the institution's property strategy, currently under redefinition.

Finally, it should be noted that 2019 was marked by the achievement of the priorities defined in the objectives and performance contract for handling the collections: a return to a median cataloguing deadline of six weeks for books arriving under the legal deposit registration scheme, the maintenance of a significant level of activity as regards preventive and curative preservation, and making improvements to the thermo-hygrometric tools in the storage areas.

## Cooperation and scientific promotion as key goals

The BnF carries out a large number of national and international cooperation activities that facilitate the sharing of its expertise, the pooling of its infrastructures and the co-production of content.

Exceptionally, in 2019, the National Library of France, renowned for its expertise in digitisation, was requested by the government to provide part of the processing prior to the analysis of the contributions of the Great National Debate. It was therefore responsible for the digitisation of typed paper contributions and their transcriptions (OCR processing).

The Library's ongoing cooperation initiatives are being deployed throughout France. Cooperation is primarily documentary, via the Union Catalogue of France, and through support for the digitisation of local collections and the creation and consultation of Internet archives. In 2019, the newly deployed collaborative tool TapIR (Traitement automatisé pour la production d'instruments de recherche, Automated Processing for the Production of Research Instruments) has enabled over 100 new manuscript inventories to be published nationwide.

The PLATON platform, a key tool for collaboration between publishers and accredited bodies, which provides access to reading for individuals with disabilities, has been significantly developed over the course of the year: By the end of 2019, over 100 accredited bodies had been registered and almost 16,000 new files had been deposited, largely thanks to a new method for the registration of files adapted by such bodies; this involves streaming, rather than the individual registration of files. The number of files deposited thus increased from 1,000 at the end of 2018 to 7,200 at the end of 2019.

Gallica's collective and cooperative dimension has continued to grow. The digital library now offers users access to the collections of over 420 national and international partners. By the end of 2019, following the launch of *NumBa*, the digital library of the Centre for International Cooperation in Agricultural Research for Development (Centre de coopération internationale en recherche agronomique pour le développement, CIRAD), seven digital libraries were set up using the Gallica marque blanche (Vanilla Gallica) infrastructure and are accessible on line. Gallica marque blanche is a

cooperation mechanism for institutions that have digitised or wish to digitise, part of their collections but either do not have a dissemination platform or wish to update their platform.

In 2019, the BnF carried out an inventory of its foreign heritage collections. This made it possible to locate almost 2 million records and identify collections that are outstanding in terms of their scientific, political or symbolic interest; these will gradually be digitised and scientifically enhanced. In 2018, the president of the BnF decided to establish a strategic committee which would also monitor sources. This committee in 2019 undertook a great deal of work, including the publication of a public document formalising the institution's policy on the management of assets requiring special attention due to their origin and method of entry into the collections, and the creation of unified digital access to entry registers, associated with a systematic digitisation campaign. Digitisation now plays a central role in international cooperation: the dissemination and showcasing of non-European collections within the [\*Patrimoines partagés \(Shared Heritage\)\*](#) digital collection constitutes a powerful political lever for digital unification between international institutions.

In 2019, the BnF's commitment to heritage protection received the support of the International Alliance for the Protection of Heritage in Conflict Zones (Alliance internationale pour la protection du patrimoine dans les zones de conflit, ALIPH), which allocated 880,000 dollars to the BnF for its project to safeguard and disseminate Iraqi written heritage.

One of the Library's fundamental scientific missions is to run research programs linked to the heritage for which it is responsible. In accordance with the initiatives contained in the research roadmap established in late 2018, in 2019 the BnF drafted two reference documents: for its research partners, *La recherche à la BnF : Stratégie et organisation (Research at the BnF: strategy and organisation)* and a *guide to research projects* for internal use. The year 2019 also witnessed the online publication of a *Directory of Specialists and Experts* (<https://experts.bnf.fr/>) with the aim of enhancing the skills of the institution's staff and facilitating contact with researchers and partners. Lastly, the BnF signed a scientific and cultural partnership framework agreement with the Collège de France higher education and research establishment, which covers three fields: scientific collaboration, the dissemination of knowledge and the exchange of expertise and information. At the European level, the BnF is participating in three projects co-funded by the European Commission: The [Rise of Literacy](#) which looked at the use of written text in Europe from the sixth to the twentieth century ; [Digitens](#), the first open-access digital encyclopaedia on sociability in Europe throughout the long-eighteenth century and [NewsEye](#), a digital investigator for historical newspapers.

## A strong commitment with regard to human resources and financial balance

The reorganisation of the Human Resources function took effect on 1 December 2018, following the deliberations of the Board of Directors on 21 June on the reorganisation of the Department of Human Resources and the publication of positions within the framework of the internal movement to strengthen this function: the number of vacant positions halved in 2019.

2019 witnessed the deployment of teleworking within the framework of the Ministry of Culture's guidelines, in accordance with the Decree of 11 February 2016 on the terms and conditions of implementing teleworking. The BnF is committed to the prevention of psychosocial risks and is fully in line with the deployment of the Ministry of Culture's prevention policy which was formalised in the circular of 18 December 2018, "RPS, violences et harcèlement au travail et dispositifs d'alerte et de traitement" ("RPS, violence and harassment at work and warning and processing systems"). In this context, a specific procedure for reporting and dealing with situations involving psychological and sexual harassment has been introduced within the institution.

On a budgetary level, the BnF has continued to control its operational and investment expenditure and has maximised its staff, operation and investment budget consumption rates. This rigorous management testifies to the institution's proactive policy towards a less expensive, sustainable operation, whilst remaining efficient. Staff budget expenditure in 2019 (141 million euros) was marked by the deployment of the BnF's new compensation policy; this resulted from the implementation of the RIFSEEP (state civil servants compensation scheme), and represented new expenditure of 1.2 million euros in 2019. Almost two thirds of BnF staff are affected by these measures. The application of this new compensation scheme at the BnF involved paying particular attention to lower category staff: through the IFSE, it supervises and allows regular pay increases and promotes equal pay for men and women.

2019 was characterised by a strong increase in the level of patronage, partnerships and donations. Prospecting campaigns are particularly oriented towards the renovation of heritage spaces on the Richelieu site.

#### **Some 2019 figures**

- Publishers legal deposit: 79,582 books; 212,661 periodical issues; 11,484 brochures and other publications; 9,748 specialised documents and 19,606 audiovisual documents

- Collection of 3.1 billion URLs as part of the web legal deposit

- Acquisition, excluding heritage acquisitions, of 54,230 monographs

- 920,818 visits to reading rooms at all sites and access provided to 942,073 documents

- 5.9 million openly available documents contained in Gallica ([www.gallica.fr](http://www.gallica.fr)); 15,534,326 visits; 427 partners

- Attendance at temporary exhibitions (both with an entrance fee and free of charge): 335,545 admissions

- Attendance at public events (debates, conferences, symposia, concerts, readings): 25,361 persons

- 20,625 pupils and teachers participated in educational activities and 14,278 people took part in visits and workshops

- BnF workforce (end 2019): 2,295 employees (i.e. 2,147 full-time equivalents)

- 2019 budget: in CA, €225m

The whole annual report (in French) is available at <https://www.bnf.fr/fr/bnf-rapport-dactivite-2019>.