Deutsche Nationalbibliothek
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German National Library

Annual Report 2019

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Nothing is permanent without change!

This quote assigned to Goethe describes the very essence of the German National Library (DNB): collecting, cataloguing, educating and integrating while encouraging and enabling in the context of partnerships and networks. However, this can only function, if we come together and invent the future pragmatically while identifying and adopting different perspectives, if we accept complexity and uncertainty as something natural, if we live them and shape them.

On that note, the year 2019 was again marked by changes that were essential for the German National Library to continue its role as the active memory of the country's past and future cultural heritage. The most important change for me personally was when Elisabeth Niggemann handed over her office at the end of last year. The work she so outstandingly organised and began must now be continued and expanded in cooperation with our partners while positioning the German National Library as the central stakeholder in a dynamic digital information landscape.

From an outside perspective, the most obvious change is probably DNB's new website. The autumn of 2019 also saw the publication of the new information brochure "Search. Find. Explore" in German and English to complement the website's contemporary design. However, visualisation is also the focus of a completely different project which we pick out as an example in this annual report: after all, an active cultural memory is not merely a silent repository of treasures but also houses vital "chambers of marvels for digital reuse", as Philippe Genêt describes the Coding da Vinci hackathons. This is where data and metadata are transformed into applications. Since 2019, a newly established office at the German National Library has been making sure that these activities become still more sustainable with the help of funding from the German Federal Cultural Foundation.

Last year also saw the start of another "major transformation project" focusing on retrospective catalogue enrichment: in February, staff began checking around 5.3 million books that were published between 1945 and 2012 and are housed in the stacks in Frankfurt am Main to determine whether the tables of contents have been digitised. Within three years, we expect to be able to make an estimated 2.7 million tables of contents available; this is equivalent to an additional six million pages of text information.

Change is the only constant, even in the case of work processes and forms of organisation; for organisations such as libraries, these changes are often the most difficult, since the general belief is that "things have worked well enough up until now". Here too, different perspectives must be identified and adopted, since the individual picture of a work phase or work area is not the overall picture of an institution. The development of a media acquisitions concept and the formation of a corresponding new organisational unit for „Media Acquisitions" have now been implemented in Frankfurt am Main as well as in Leipzig.

The effects of change have also left their mark on our staff; 54 "newcomers" were appointed in 2019, which is a significant achievement for everyone involved in the Central Administration department and the respective other divisions of the Library. Despite this, we still sometimes find ourselves "caught short", but even these situations are dealt with calmly and pragmatically. One new way in which we are building up our human resources is by means of the three-year Bachelor's degree course in applied computer science which we at the German National Library began offering in partnership with Baden-Württemberg Cooperative State University in Mannheim in the winter semester of 2019.

The digital humanities are also continuing to develop dynamically, and the DNB has accordingly intensified its activities in this field, which blends the humanities and computer science. The first projects are already under way, and the German National Library is involved in the Text+ and NFDI4Culture applications forming consortia for the National Research Data Infrastructure (NFDI).

Strong brands under the roof of the German National Library: this is how the successful cultural events and activities carried out by the German Museum of Books and Writing, the German Exile Archive 1933–1945 and the German Music Archive can be summed up. However, these are not the only events worth mentioning: as in previous years, we exhibited at the book fairs in Leipzig and Frankfurt am Main, took part in reading festivals such as "Frankfurt liest ein Buch" and "Leipzig liest", and contributed to "Lange Nächte" of music and science, Open Heritage Site Days, Literature Days and Industrial Culture Days. The German National Library also had a stand and gave talks at the Deutscher Bibliothekartag event besides participating in other national and international conferences.

I would like to thank all our staff for their hard work and dedication over the past year and all our partners and friends for their cooperation and loyalty to our institution. Only with your help we can bring about change and ensure that the German National Library continues to fulfil its role as the memory of the country's past and future cultural heritage!

Frank Scholze, Director General

Collect & Preserve

In 2019, almost three million media works were added to the German National Library's collections. This means that its holdings now encompass more than 39 million items. The number of online publications imported over the course of a year has nearly reached the two million mark. 2019 saw the establishment of a Media Acquisitions section at the DNB's Frankfurt site, an equivalent section having already been set up in Leipzig in 2017. As a result, the majority of the media works

deposited in physical form are now inventoried centrally. The condition of almost all the holdings in the four repository towers in Leipzig has now been recorded using the Bonpland app. Maps have been created for 19 floors in the towers, and the condition of each group of holdings has been recorded by damage category. The overall results are still pending; fortunately, however, the majority of the media works were found to be in a good state of preservation. By the end of the year, almost 7.5 million online publications had been stored in the German National Library's long-term archive. The transfer of the collection of online publications to the long-term archive is progressing smoothly and can be regulated as necessary.

Workflow optimised.

The consolidation phase for the new Media Acquisitions section at the Leipzig location ended in March 2019. All incoming media are now received and inventoried at one place; they are no longer classified by kind of media or frequency. Ideally, the publications should be processed within 24 hours. In summer, following positive experiences with the establishment of a central Media Acquisitions section in Leipzig, work began on converting the workflows involved in the processing of media at the German National Library's site in Frankfurt am Main.

Document & Disseminate

The German National Library is dedicated to making culture and knowledge visible in the information age by providing reliable, digitally cross-linked, freely and readily usable data and bibliographic information. In 2019, it catalogued around 170,000 books, journals, sound carriers and other physical media works using the international Resource Description and Access (RDA) standard and assigned each of them to a subject category. As one of its strategic priorities, the German National Library is working on standardising its cataloguing procedures for various groups of publications and dovetailing its intellectual and machine-based cataloguing processes more closely. DDC Short Numbers will be replacing full numbers when cataloguing certain groups of publications. The ever-growing number of data subscribers shows that the German National Library's efforts to promote the free flow of data and realise the vision of a freely accessible "web of data" are proving to be successful. Here it is important that the German National Library's bibliographic data and the authority data in the Integrated Authority File (GND) remain freely accessible under "Creative Commons Zero" conditions (CC0 1.0). Access statistics for the linked data dumps show that they are actively used with download figures in the middle three-digit range.

Present & Inspire

The German National Library makes every effort to obtain rights or licenses to use works protected by copyright. It uses innovative procedures to research and provide access to its holdings. In 2019, another 358,023 pages taken from 22,925 books and journals were digitised as part of the DNB's digitisation strategy; the originals could no longer be used because of their poor state of preservation. By the end of the year, the DNB's collection of digitised works consisted of 157,473 media comprising almost 11.2 million pages and 27,622 audio works. The expansion of the retrospective catalogue enrichment work meant that more than 2.1 million tables of content had also been made freely available for digital use by the end of the year. The service providing regional extracts from the e-paper collection is now also available in the reading rooms in Leipzig and Frankfurt, where users can access more than 1,400 titles and over 2.4 million issues. The number of active users was 1.8 percent up on the previous year. 351,432 media works were available for access in the reading rooms. The collection of online publications was accessed more than 10.6 million times, which also constitutes a significant increase. In November, the German National Library's Administrative Council decided to suspend general user fees on a trial basis for a

period of two years. The German National Library appointed a provenance research expert, who started work on 1 July 2019. The German National Library's new website went online on 3 July 2019.

Integrate & Organise

Whether in the area of standardisation, the current discussion on copyright or for projects relating to the Integrated Authority File (GND) or the Deutsche Digitale Bibliothek (German Digital Library – DDB): in 2019, the German National Library continued its close cooperation with its partner institutions, on committees and in working groups at national and international level besides fostering interdisciplinary cooperation between libraries, archives and museums. Work also continued on depicting open access markers and licences in the various metadata formats. General open access and rights markers were anchored in the MARC 21 format. Conceptual and technical principles were determined and discussed with user groups as part of the project "GND for Cultural Data" (GND4C), the goal of which is to develop the Integrated Authority File (GND) into an interdisciplinary instrument for cross-linking culture and science. With regard to persistent identifiers, the German National Library and the 405 partner institutions assigned more than 3.5 million URNs in the namespace urn:nbn:de in 2019. The number of items referenced using URNs has therefore grown to more than 42 million. New developments are also taking effect in the Deutsche Digitale Bibliothek (German Digital Library – DDB): the DDB newspaper portal project set up for the purpose of establishing a central platform for digitised newspapers has now got under way. With DDBstudio, the institutions registered with the DDB now also have a new tool with which they can create virtual exhibitions.

The culture hackathon "Coding da Vinci" is showcasing the potential of digital culture data and its reuse. In total, 130 fully functional applications such as apps, websites, films, robots, visualisations and games have been developed during the eight hackathons that have taken place so far. Around 170 cultural and memory institutions, including the German National Library and its German Museum of Books and Writing, have provided data for this purpose. Thus, cultural heritage has often been made accessible in a way that is sometimes playful and always original and innovative. In 2019, the hackathons were assigned their own office at the German National Library in Frankfurt am Main.

Encourage & Enable

In 2019, the German National Library managed a budget of approximately 55 million Euro together with approximately 1.5 million Euro in external funding. In 2019, new staff recruitment channels were tested in response to demographic changes: Standing invitations to submit applications and bundled invitations for career starters will position the DNB as an employer on an applicant market that is becoming increasingly tight. With regard to organisational matters, 2019 was again dominated by the further development of business processes and organisational structures. The Organisation and Controlling section, for example, assisted the User Services and Collection Management department with updating the organisational review and determining staffing requirements. A project for digitising administrative procedures has also been initiated. In autumn 2019, the new information brochure "Search. Find. Explore" was published in German and English to complement the new website. This rounds off the wide variety of information channels provided by the German National Library.

Seamless transition

In December 2019, Director General Elisabeth Niggemann received an appreciative send-off in a ceremony attended by more than 200 invited guests. Günter Winands, chair of the Administrative Council and under-secretary to Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media Monika Grütters, praised the outstanding work she had done during her 20 years in office: "You guided the German National Library into the digital age with the utmost success and positioned it as a key player in this extremely dynamic field." In her farewell speech, Elisabeth Niggemann emphasised how much her work has given her – in instructive experiences and special relationships. Afterwards, Günter Winands presented the certificate of appointment to her successor Frank Scholze. The former Director of Library Services at the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology expressed the wish to continue developing the German National Library as the nation's "cultural memory of the past and future".

Some figures

| 576,5 full time equivalents
| total budget: 56,716,000 Euro
| total holdings: 39,016,827 items
| new acquisitions in 2019: 2,929,390 items
| users per day: 597
| orders per day: 1,388

The complete annual report for 2019 can be found at: https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:101-20200326214 (in German only).