

## Examples, goals, possibilities and limitations of international cooperation

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Keywords: international cooperation

### Abstract

"International cooperation" has become one of the key issues in the library environment. The benefits of cooperation are important for both the library community and its users. National boundaries lose their importance, especially in the field of electronic publications. National libraries are responsible for the archiving of national publications. The cooperation between national libraries becomes extremely attractive in the field of electronic publications, such as online theses and dissertations.

Being a multilingual country with federalist structures the Swiss National Library ("Schweizerische Landesbibliothek") has experiences with the possibilities and limitations of cooperation. The strategic partnership with German National Library ("Die Deutsche Bibliothek") and the Austrian National Library (Österreichische Nationalbibliothek) in the field of the deposit of electronic publications and the presentation of the state of the art at the "Schweizerische Landesbibliothek" will serve as examples for this presentation.

## Preface

"When a community loses its memory, its members no longer know one another. How can they know one another if they have forgotten or have never learned one another's stories? If they do not know one another's stories, how can they know whether or not to trust one another? People who do not trust one another do not help one another, and moreover they fear one another."

This citation comes from "Home economics"<sup>1</sup> a collection of essays written by the American author Wendell Berry (1934-) and gives an idea why cooperation with other people and institutions is important. The experience of the "Schweizerische Landesbibliothek" in the field of cooperation with other institutions is positive - even if there are limitations. The paper presents two examples of successful cooperation in the domain of electronic collections and one example where the field of international actions is limited.

## The "Schweizerische Landesbibliothek" and its context

### History and main tasks

The "Schweizerische Landesbibliothek" (SNL) has been founded in 1895 (see also: <http://www.snl.ch>). The library is located in Bern which is the capital of Switzerland. The national bibliography "The Swiss Book" is published since 1901. In 1991 the Swiss Literary Archives have been opened. In 2001, after an extensive expansion and renovation work the "Schweizerische Landesbibliothek" has inaugurated its present building. The libraries' main task is to collect Helvetica, to list its collections on databases, to preserve them for future generations and to make them accessible to the general public. Helvetica are publications which have been written by Swiss authors, or which have been published in Switzerland or foreign publications with Switzerland as main topic. Swiss media production in its narrower sense is donated to the "Schweizerische Landesbibliothek" on the basis of agreements with the Association of Swiss Booksellers and Publishers who undertake to supply published printed works free of charge. The law about the "Schweizerische Landesbibliothek", which was revised in 1992 includes the collection of electronic offline and online publications. University theses and dissertations are also part of the collection of the "Schweizerische Landesbibliothek". The "Schweizerische Landesbibliothek" is one of the only national libraries which makes home-lending for some of its collections. 180 persons are currently working at the "Schweizerische Landesbibliothek". The library is funded by the Swiss government.

### National context

Switzerland is a small country in the middle of Europe. There are about 7 million inhabitants speaking four different official national languages: Swiss German (64%), French (20%), Italian (8%), Rhaeto-Romanic (1%), other languages (7%). Universities are located in the German speaking, in the French speaking and in the Italian speak-

<sup>1</sup> Berry, Wendell. - Home economics / Wendell Berry. - New York : North Point Press, 1987. - P. 4; ix ([http://www.imls.gov/conference/namls2002/carr.htm#\\_edn12](http://www.imls.gov/conference/namls2002/carr.htm#_edn12))

ing part of Switzerland. There is no university in the Rhaeto-Romanic speaking part of the country. The university libraries are organized in two big networks. One network contains the universities of the German and Italian speaking community and the other contains the universities of the French speaking community. There are classical university libraries and technical university libraries in both networks.

### National cooperation

The national cooperation is organized on different levels. There is on one hand the "Association of Libraries and Librarians of Switzerland" and on the other hand the "Conference of Directors of University Libraries". When it comes to cooperation concerning electronic theses and dissertations the discussions will be held by the "Conference of Directors of University Libraries". The "Schweizerische Landesbibliothek" is not a university library. The university of Bern has its own library which is located quite close to the "Schweizerische Landesbibliothek". However the "Schweizerische Landesbibliothek" is a member of the "Conference of Directors of University Libraries".

### e-Helvetica project

In order to build up an electronic collection of Helvetica the "Schweizerische Landesbibliothek" has started the e-Helvetica project in 2001. The main objective of the project is to collect electronic online and offline publications, to list the collections on databases, to make them accessible to the general public and to preserve them for future generations. The long term preservation SYSTEM will be built up in collaboration with the Swiss Federal Archives. In 2004 the storage place will be available. In the period after 2004 first steps of the building up of the national electronic collection will be undertaken. Another field of work will contain the research about long term preservation. More information about the e-Helvetica project can be found at <http://www.e-helvetica.ch>.

## International cooperation

In the context of the e-Helvetica project the "Schweizerische Landesbibliothek" has intensified the cooperation with two other national libraries: "Die Deutsche Bibliothek" and "Österreichische Nationalbibliothek". The main purpose of the cooperation between national libraries is to agree on the usage of standards and procedures in an internationalized world. The cooperation with these two national libraries has for example helped to initialize the usage of a standard within Switzerland.

### Cooperation with "DDB" and "ÖNB"

The cooperation between the three national libraries began in 2001 with a meeting in Frankfurt between "Die Deutsche Bibliothek" and the "Schweizerische Landesbibliothek". In 2002 the "Österreichische Nationalbibliothek" joined the group. The first meetings were based on an exchange about the status of the projects. Very soon after the simple exchange of information the cooperation turned into a real working group between three national libraries. Several ideas and initiatives of "Die Deutsche Bibliothek" were so well planned and attractive, and the willingness of "Die Deutsche Bibliothek" to share knowledge so fabulous, that "real work" could be realized. In some cases the plans for a cooperation succeeded, in other cases they didn't because of limitations.

### Metadata for electronic theses and dissertations

"Die Deutsche Bibliothek" collects electronic theses and dissertations since 1998 (see also: <http://www.ddb.de/professionell/dissonline.htm>). In collaboration with the German university libraries a procedure for the transfer of the electronic text from the university library to the national library has been organized. The metadata set for the description of the theses and dissertations has been developed (see also: <http://deposit.ddb.de/metadiss.htm>). The workflow for the delivery of the electronic text has been developed. Beside explaining the project, "Die Deutsche Bibliothek" has given access to all the relevant documents including the form for submitting the theses and dissertations to the "Schweizerische Landesbibliothek". The metadata set has been analyzed by the three national libraries and adaptations have been made concerning the needs of each national library.

The discussions about a national strategy concerning electronic theses and dissertations in Switzerland began only in 2002. The "Conference of Directors of University Libraries" mandated a working group which should make recommendations about a national strategy in the field of the publishing and long term preservation of electronic theses and dissertations. One employee of the "Schweizerische Landesbibliothek" was part of the working group. The experience of "Die Deutsche Bibliothek" and the previous work on the metadata set was very helpful. The fact that the metadata set had been approved by three national libraries, and the fact that it had been successfully used in Germany was very convincing for the directors of the Swiss university libraries. They have given their general agreement in adopting the metadata set. International cooperation has in this sense influenced national guidelines.

### URN - Uniform Resource Name

During the discussions among the colleagues of the three national libraries the question of persistent identifiers has been arisen. "Die Deutsche Bibliothek" has been working in the URN-field (Uniform Resource Name) for quite a

while. The proposition was to enlarge the usage of the decentralized URN infrastructure from Germany to Switzerland and Austria (see also: <http://www.persistent-identifier.de>). A common workflow and usage of the URN resolving service and infrastructure should be the result. Both the "Schweizerische Landesbibliothek" and the "Österreichische Nationalbibliothek" agreed to collaborate. This new collaboration is now in the phase of tests and adaptations. Instead of three different developments and structures per country a common solution will be found. This is another successful example of international cooperation.

#### **System for long term preservation**

National libraries have to build up SYSTEMs for the long term preservation for electronic documents. Several projects in Europe and elsewhere deal actually with this challenge. In the planning phase for the long term preservation SYSTEM, the "Schweizerische Landesbibliothek" has been looking for partners in order to profit of synergies and in order to keep the costs down. One of the very attractive options would have been to collaborate with another national library. Administrative limitations in

Switzerland forced us to look for a national partnership and the international cooperation in this field has been limited. Fortunately a good national solution has been found and the long term preservation SYSTEM will now be built up in cooperation with the Swiss Federal Archives.

## **Conclusion**

The described examples show that international cooperation is possible and partners that can get a clear benefit out of it. In the case of the "Schweizerische Landesbibliothek" there are some restrictions on the administrative side, but certainly none on the professional side. The condition for success is an open minded way of working together. In this sense the wish of Wendell Berry becomes true, and working together is a way of "knowing one another's stories and trust one another".