

CENL REPORT

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THE CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN NATIONAL LIBRARIANS IN 2003-2004

The **Conference of European National Librarians (CENL)** is a foundation under Dutch law with the aim of increasing and reinforcing the role of national libraries in Europe, in particular in respect of their responsibilities for maintaining the national cultural heritage and ensuring the accessibility of knowledge in that field. Members of CENL are the national librarians of all Member States of [the Council of Europe](#). The conference currently consists of [43 members](#) from 41 European countries (December 2003). CENL has a standing committee for projects; many of these are subsidised by [the European Commission](#).

In 2003 the 17th CENL Annual General Meeting was held in Vilnius, Lithuania, at the Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania, hosted by our colleague Dr. Vladas Bulavas, sadly since deceased. During this meeting, the CENL welcomed as a new member Sreten Ugricic from the National Library of Serbia. Two resolutions were passed: one supporting the continuing reconstruction of the National and University Library building of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the reconstitution of its collections, staff training and the development of an integrated library and information network to secure Bosnia and Herzegovina's place in the Knowledge Society. The second resolution supported plans to create a new pan-European library service to be called the European Library.

THE EUROPEAN LIBRARY

The European Library service will provide resource discovery facilities aimed at researchers and informed citizens. It will offer integrated access to the collections of the national libraries of Europe alongside information about the libraries themselves.

The creation of this service represents the successful culmination of 36 months of work by the partners in the TEL project, an accompanying measure funded under the European Union's IST programme. The project has provided an environment in which partners could investigate both the business and technical issues which needed to be resolved before a service could be set up. The outcomes are a development plan for implementing the new service, a flexible metadata system for objects and collections which will be capable of responding to new developments and a novel portal environment using the SRU (Search and Retrieve via URL) protocol to provide integrated access to a central database of harvested metadata and distributed databases using the SRU or Z39.50 protocols.

The development of the service will be based upon the outcomes of the project and will be launched towards the end of 2004. The development and support of "The European Library" will be carried out by a specially created and staffed "European Library Office" which will be hosted by the Koninklijke Bibliotheek in the Netherlands and funded by contributions from the national libraries.

The main achievements of the TEL project have been:

- the creation of a consensus between national libraries on the mission and content of The European Library and agreement on a business model for the development and support of The European Library Service;
- the establishment of agreed metadata profiles (based on common standards) for objects and collections within an environment which will enable their controlled evolution to accommodate new types of material and new collections as The European Library grows;
- the design of a flexible system architecture based on the SRU protocol.

Homepage of the TEL project: www.europeanlibrary.org

THE FUTURE OF CENL

The expansion of CENL and the creation of the European Library Service have required a review of CENL structures and activities in order to ensure that it still responds to the members' needs and interests. In 2004, CENL mandated a highly regarded library specialist to carry out this review. Using a mixture of one-one discussions, telephone calls and a written survey of all members, the consultant has produced recommendations that will be discussed in the annual meeting in September 2004.

Jean-Frédéric Jauslin, Chairman CENL / 5. May 2004