

CHAPTER 20

A Cooperative Model for a National Digital Library

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While the Internet provides an ever-increasing amount of information, readers are in need of a selection that takes into account the quality of the information. An important aspect of the information is the reliability of the source involved and (at least in many cases) its independence. This is a role to be provided by digital libraries.

Essential values of the library sector include its reliability, independence, accessibility, pluriformity and authenticity. This role, by definition, cannot be taken over by the market.

A NATIONAL DIGITAL LIBRARY

In The Netherlands the national library, the Koninklijke Bibliotheek (KB),¹ traditionally collects one copy of every newly printed Dutch publication and its objective is to be able to make all Dutch publications digitally available by 2025. In 2015, under the new Dutch Library Act, the KB is allocated new core tasks, in particular the management of the network of public library facilities and the development and maintenance of the national digital library. This is a perfect situation for setting up a national digital library: the national library translates the infrastructure for public libraries, combined with its national role in the area of science into an integrated portfolio of services for end users and the supporting positions needed for this. This creates a dynamic information environment (platform) that can form the basis for innovation and development.

In my view, a national digital library makes the content of all libraries financed by public funds visible. Its mission is: provide easy access to information, which can be traced back to a recognisable source from an independent position.

Just like everyone can walk into a library building for information, or to read the newspaper, the national digital library is also accessible to

¹ <https://www.kb.nl/en>.

everyone, from home or wherever you are. Access is free of charge; no membership is required.

This means that people can easily:

- see what information is offered by publicly funded libraries (catalogue),
- consult out-of-copyright information, and
- become a member of the library for other information.

The out-of-copyright information that everyone can consult directly contains, in particular:

- cultural and scientific heritage: anything published before 1876 is out-of-copyright in any case;
- the materials for which the copyright has been bought off: books, newspapers and magazines;
- Open Access materials, and particularly scientific publication other than magazines based on the subscription model.

In a structure like this, the customer is provided with maximum service in his search for information.

The digital library consists of three components:

- The collections of all libraries financed by public funds.
- The target groups: citizens, children, professionals, researchers, persons with a reading impairment, etc.
- Mediation between target groups and objects: searching and finding, personalisations, context. The library goes beyond offering information and helps the customer to get the maximum out of it.

COOPERATION IN THE LIBRARY SECTOR

As stated, a national digital library should not limit itself to public libraries. From the libraries' perspective, this is useful because it allows for synergy and promotes efficiency through a joint infrastructure. The national library, university libraries and public libraries should have regular discussions about the communal information infrastructure for libraries. In The Netherlands, for instance, a flexible model has been created where subjects such as processing metadata, offering digitised collections, interlibrary loans, licences and services can be raised collectively when required.

But the main advantage is to the user. Until now, the user is too often inconvenienced by the fact that the libraries are funded from different systems. Public libraries are funded by the local authority to serve the regional community. Scientific libraries and libraries belonging to educational institutions are funded by their institution for the benefit of the employees and

students of the institution itself. In all cases, access is limited to the institution's own target group.

However, many communities are not local in the geographic or organisational sense, such as amateur researchers, interest groups or patient associations.

Currently, the digital collections from one library sector are not accessible for the users from other sectors, or only at conditions that are a considerable inconvenience or expense. A familiar example is the access to scientific information outside the scientific institutions. It should be an important spearhead of the national digital library to make a considerable improvement to the access across the sectors. One of the strategies in doing so is the support of Open Access of scientific publications.

COOPERATION IN THE CULTURAL HERITAGE SECTOR

The national digital library will limit itself mainly to books, newspapers and magazines. Archival material is collected, stored and made available by the archival institutions. The organisation responsible for audio-visual material fulfils a key role in this area. Other organisations, such as the Academy of Arts and Sciences, play a central role in the provision of research data.

The collections of archives, media, museums and knowledge institutions are increasingly becoming available online and in digital format. In these sectors, functional and technical facilities are being developed to be able to digitally manage these collections, make them available and use them. The sectors differ, but they have the same purpose: to make collections visible, allow them to be used and store them in a sustainable way.

Cooperation between these (heritage) institutions is essential.

The user would like integrated access to the various collections and is often only moderately interested in the institutional origins. By making sensible agreements about metadata and aggregation, this is achievable.

But cooperation is also necessary for storage and preservation. The traditional difference between the various collections is fading. The difference between libraries and archives is based on a definition of the concept of 'publication' that is no longer entirely up to date. New publication forms such as websites and blogs, for example, do not fall within this definition, nor are they considered as 'archives' by the archive world. They risk falling between two stools. What is more, now that the publications collected by the library are becoming digital, new forms of publication are also occurring through the combination of various media. In science, we see

publications provided with the primary data, or a publication that consists of an annotated data model. Books are sometimes provided with audio and moving images. The publications in question cannot be taken apart into components without throwing out the concept of the publication. Therefore, they must be kept in their integrated form, but it is inefficient to set up separate infrastructures for storage in the various institutions. It is therefore necessary that the heritage institutions work on an integrated storage facility.

CONCLUSION

The introduction of information and communications technology (ICT) has led to the fading of many existing boundaries. In the information sector, this is clear between the parties in the traditional information chain: the publisher, the book store and the library are all working on redefining their future role. The same applies for the traditional boundaries between the various parties in the heritage sector. The social objectives of these organisations will be seriously hindered if the parties hold on to the traditional boundaries too tightly and for too long. The purpose of these organisations is less and less determined by their own mission, and increasingly by their network and the role that they play in it. As a result, cooperation is becoming an essential condition of existence.