Mission

The Swiss National Library is the custodian of Helvetica.

The Swiss National Library (NL) collects Helvetica created since the foundation of the federal state in 1848.

Our collection comprises

- printed and digital publications related to Switzerland,
- selected visual documents on Switzerland, its population and its personalities,
- literary estates and archives that are important for the literatures of Switzerland from the 20th century onwards in the Swiss Literary Archives.

The NL preserves the content and the original form of the documents entrusted to it. It catalogues them in accordance with recognised standards and makes them available to all interested parties. It networks nationally and internationally with institutions that have a similar remit.

The NL operates the Centre Dürrenmatt Neuchâtel, a cultural venue devoted to the pictorial work of Friedrich Dürrenmatt.

Acting on behalf of the NL, the Swiss National Sound Archives collect, preserve, catalogue and provide access to audio documents related to Switzerland.
Vision

Sources from Switzerland for the world: anytime, anywhere, for everyone.

The Swiss National Library is a memory institution of the Swiss Confederation. Together with other libraries, as well as the archives and museums of Switzerland and other countries around the world, we contribute to the preservation of cultural heritage.

Within this global network we ensure that texts, images and sound recordings related to Switzerland are preserved for future generations and made accessible worldwide. In so doing, we enable everyone to use these documents for their own purposes. We support research by both institutions and individuals, thereby encouraging reflection on Swiss identity.

To this end, we maintain the most important collection of texts on Switzerland since 1848 anywhere in the world, as well as a significant collection of images on the country’s culture and history. Sound recordings are managed on our behalf by the Swiss National Sound Archives.

We work with information producers to continually expand our collections. Printed material is collected as completely as possible; in all other cases we retain a representative selection. We preserve all media in their original form for generations to come, and make their content available in a readable format.

We ensure that access to our collections is comprehensive and simple. We therefore catalogue them and make them freely available: completely on our premises and with a selection online. Important documents are accessible worldwide on widely used platforms. Access may be restricted for legal or conservational reasons.

Our services assist anyone interested in using our collections. We participate in specialist discussions among memory institutions and in the humanities; we are also a place at which knowledge is shared and exchanged.

Our outreach programme enables the public at large to reflect in depth on the issues of today in the light of materials handed down from the past. By extending access to the virtual realm, we maximise the number of people who can share in their cultural heritage.

We perform our tasks with a high degree of professionalism and deploy our resources in a targeted manner. We continually develop the skills of our employees. Periodically, we review our structures and processes.
Strategy

Our collection is analogue. And it is digital.
It is quick to find and easy to use.

The volume of digital information now exceeds that of information on paper. But paper will not disappear. The world of things and the world of data exist in parallel and are interlinked. More and more people operate in both spheres.

As a memory institution of the Swiss Confederation, the NL stands ready to address this reality. We maintain our collections on paper while expanding our digital collections. We successfully use the methods of paper conservation and participate in the development of processes for the long-term preservation of digital content. We catalogue analogue and digital content in accordance with international standards and play a part in the latter’s development. We make our documents available on site and online and add value by placing them in relevant contexts.

Our actions serve the needs of those for whom our collection is important: students, specialists and researchers in the humanities, but above all the people of Switzerland.

Our key action areas for the coming years are as follows:

1. Preserving records of the present for the future.
2. Making our content easy to find and simple to use.
3. Supporting researchers in their work.
4. Fostering debate about Switzerland.
Strategic action area 1

Preserving records of the present for the future.

Strategic objective

Working with our partners, we will collect Helvetica on all storage media. We will guarantee their long-term preservation in their original form and their ongoing readability. We will act in line with international standards and participate in their development.

Background

The forms that printed documents take are well known and the methods used to preserve them have largely been developed. The digital world, by contrast, is very dynamic and is growing fast. New forms and formats are constantly emerging, some with very short lifecycles. The effort involved in collecting and preserving digital publications is therefore substantially higher than for printed matter. Solutions for the expedient but resource-friendly handling of this continual change have still to be developed.

Goals by 2019

1. We will have progressively expanded and maintained our collections. We will have developed guidelines for their acquisition and preservation. Where expedient, we will have entered into agreements with partner institutions for this purpose.

2. We will also have preserved fragile documents in their original form. To protect them, we will have transferred them to other media that facilitate their use and secure their content.

3. We will have built a repository for the central management of our digital content to ensure its long-term preservation and readability.

4. We will have continued our national and international cooperation in the further development of methods for preserving paper and digital documents.
Strategic action area 2

Making our content easy to find and simple to use.

Strategic objective

Our metadata and documents will be simple to locate. They will be accessible via widely used devices and on site at the NL and will be usable by anyone interested. When defining processes and applying standards, we will adopt the perspective of our users. We will make our metadata, content and services available on the platforms where our users are to be found.

Background

The search for information mostly begins using an internet search engine. Content that is not listed among the first results tends to be ignored. Those searching for information want to be able to access content easily and immediately, anywhere and at any time, and to re-use it themselves.

Goals by 2019

1. We will have prepared our content so that it is found by internet search engines and displayed among the first search results.
2. We will have completely catalogued the documents in the General Collection as well as a large part of the image and literary collections, in online databases. By the end of 2016 we will have decided how these systems are to be further developed.
3. We will have catalogued our collections in accordance with international standards. This will simplify searching and enable our metadata to be re-used.
4. We will have incorporated our catalogue data into a metacatalogue, via which they will be easily available to the public. Our own catalogue interfaces will serve the needs of information and documentation specialists.
5. We will have made our content and services accessible on site and on relevant third-party online platforms. Our emphasis will be on documents relating to individuals and places from Switzerland as well as events that are of particular importance for Switzerland.
6. We will have progressively aligned our on-site and online offering with the needs of existing and potential users and encouraged them to help shape that offering. We will attach particular importance to specialists and students of the humanities.
Strategic action area 3

Supporting researchers in their work.

Strategic objective

Through our collections and our expertise, we will help to translate information into knowledge. In particular, we will support research in the humanities. In certain cases, we will participate in research projects ourselves.

Background

National libraries network closely with each other in order to make their collections available to researchers around the globe. Thanks to the increasing availability of digitised documents, the number of easily usable sources is growing. That trend is being further accelerated by the increasing publication of born-digital documents. The humanities face the challenge of developing ways to handle the volume of data and extract new learning from it.

Goals by 2019

1. We will have assisted those who research our collections by providing institutional services and personalised advice, with an emphasis on literary studies, Swiss history and the appraisal of image holdings. We will have maintained close contacts with the relevant academic communities, adapting our offering continuously in response to new trends in research.

2. For historians, we will have further developed the Bibliography on Swiss History and linked it to platforms that add value for researchers.

3. In literary studies, and for the appraisal of our image holdings, we will have entered into research partnerships with universities and memory institutions. In literary studies we will have conducted research projects into our own collections.

4. Together with our partners, we will have published the relevant research results online or in printed form.
**Strategic action area 4**

Fostering debate about Switzerland.

*Strategic objective*

We will present our documents in historical and cultural contexts, on site and online. We will combine familiar forms of presentation with new ones. We will exploit the aura of the original and the reach of the reproduction. In so doing, we will foster debate about Switzerland and contribute to an understanding of the country.

*Background*

The digital and the analogue are two aspects of the same reality. They interact with and reinforce each other. Reproductions encourage demand for contact with the original; an encounter with a work of art prompts research in the internet. The classic media of culture dissemination – events, publications, exhibitions – are now no longer confined to the analogue world alone: they are complemented and continued in the internet.

*Goals by 2019:*

1. We will have staged a major event to raise awareness of the NL and its services among the general public in all parts of the country.

2. We will normally have organised one major exhibition a year devoted to a relevant Swiss topic, either at our location in Bern or in the Centre Dürrenmatt Neuchâtel. These will present originals from our collection. We will have extended them into the virtual realm, thereby enabling those who do not visit one of the exhibition venues to benefit from them.

3. We will have held a national or international specialist conference each year.

4. We will have continued the outreach programmes for the four literatures of Switzerland and the image collections.

5. We will stand ready to assist students, specialists, researchers, our associated communities and an interested public by providing a place to work and meet.