

The European Library – from project to service

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Background – from project

The European Library started life as the TEL Accompanying Measure; a partly European Union funded project. This project involved the national libraries of Finland, Germany, Italy, The Netherlands, Portugal, Slovenia, Switzerland, UK and the Central Institute for the Union Catalogue of Italian Libraries and for Bibliographic Information (ICCU). The project was successfully completed at the end of January 2004, delivering a test bed version and pilot submission process as well as a resolution by CENL, the Conference of European National Librarians, to support the vision for a European Library service. This resolution paved the way for financial support from CENL, giving basic membership to The European Library to all CENL member libraries and created a full membership category for the 9 'founder' members and Bibliothèque Nationale de France. The founder members guarantee funding for 3 years.

Recruitment of The European Library Office staff commenced in February 2004 and the Office was set up in May/June of 2004.

The business case for The European Library is stated as follows:

Primary

The primary business case is that, through co-operation between European National Libraries, The European Library partners will gain a significant new route to end-users and an additional showcase for their collections, products and services. Users will get integrated access to those collections, products and services via the Internet. The European Library is ideally suited for widening access to born-digital or digitised resources, but will also widen access via improved searching to non-digital resources. The European Library will also supplant the role of Gabriel as a guide to European National Libraries, encompassing much of the information it currently maintains.

The European Library will enable integrated search and discovery of resources in multiple European National Libraries. It will become the primary source in the world for such integrated access.

Secondary

The secondary business case is that The European Library provides a co-operative framework for continuous development and innovation in metadata, interoperability and other technical areas through co-operation. The European Library will also provide a stimulus for collaboration on digital collection building or development of themed collections. The European Library will not develop a commercial interest in activities contrary to the interests of individual partners (e.g.: document delivery, catalogue record supply).

.....to service

So where is The European Library going to be in this time next year? Set up under the auspices of CENL and now funded fully by the national libraries, who are members of CENL, The European Library is aiming to be operational (live to the outside world) by March 2005.

To achieve launch The European Library continues to be run as a project, completing all the work of the pilot, including technology, collection descriptions, full access, working search and retrieval as well as creating a user oriented front end.

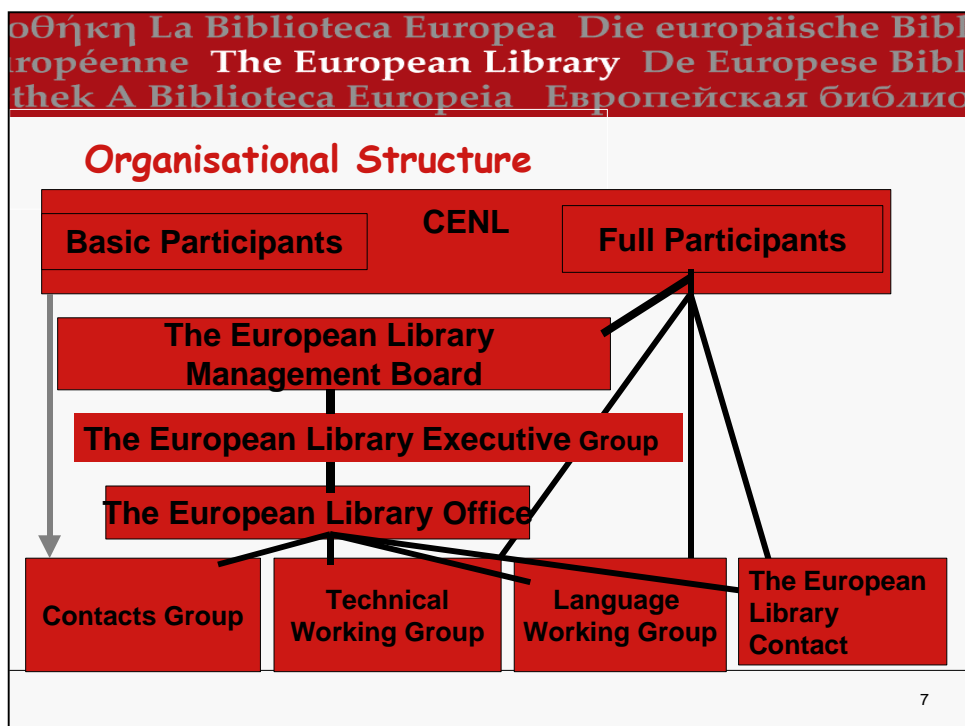
Beyond launch there will be a number of releases per year to add new features and functionality to keep the innovation and momentum going. Launch will not be a big bang but aims for a robust and stable system that attracts the end user. The use of a series of further releases during 2005 and beyond should help maintain the stability while ensuring innovation and improvement.

Organisation Structure

Structurally The European Library is owned by CENL and has a Management Board, consisting of 1 representative from each full participant and a representative from CENL itself. There is an Executive Group; derived from the Management Board and empowered to make decisions on behalf of the Management Board. The Executive Group is made up of the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Management Board and the Hosting Organisation Director.

The European Library Office itself uses the Executive Group for decision making and reports to the Management Board. The Office is responsible for four networks: The Technical Working Group (TWG), the Languages Working Group (LWG), The European Library Full Participant Contacts (ELPC) and the Basic Participant Contributors (BPC). The TWG, LWG and ELPC are made up of nominated contacts from each of the full participant libraries and the BPC are largely the former Gabriel contacts who contribute to the maintenance and support of the scheduled Guide section of The European Library.

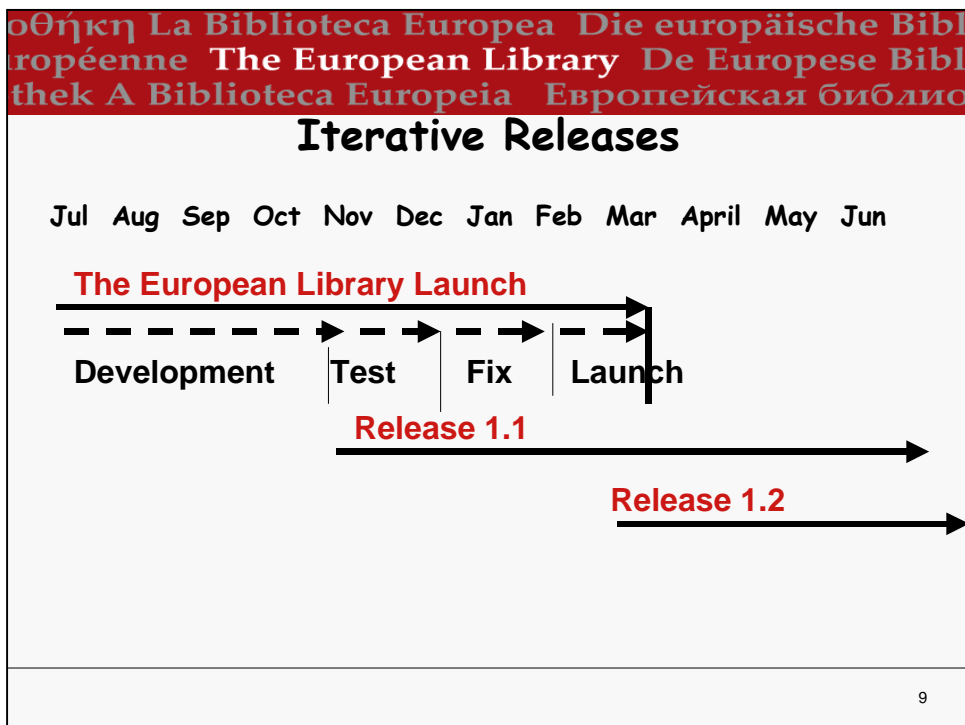
All this makes for a slightly tortuous organisation chart:



Project Organisation

From a project point of view a trans-border group of 10 libraries would not be conducive to speedy and cohesive decision making, so many of the decisions have been devolved to the Executive Group. This group effectively oversees the project to ensure that it remains on course, within budget and providing services required by the user. There are three roles taken by the Executive Group specifically for The European Library. An Executive, who is project accountable and ensures the business case is adhered to as well as monitoring the progress of the project. A Senior User, who has a lens towards looking after the user and is responsible for the provision of user resources and finally a Senior Supplier who is product accountable i.e.: that The European Library is delivered on time and in budget, and ensures that the correct resources are available.

As mentioned The European Library will use iterative releases to ensure steady, stable growth and addition of functionality.



Each release is managed as a separate project. The investigative phase of each release starts before completion of the previous one. The expectation is for at least 2 releases post launch during 2005 and up to 4 per subsequent year.

The European Library at Launch

At launch The European Library will have created access to the submitted collections of 9 full participants. All these collections will have been indexed into the central index and will be fully searchable and retrievable. The European Library will also incorporate much of the current Gabriel site that will be discontinued at this point.

It will have a user-friendly front end, aimed at meeting the needs of the researcher and informed citizen. This means that much of the intelligence of the search, i.e. which collections are searched in, will be hidden from the user in the first instance. The site will

concentrate on delivering results according to the search terms given by the user and will not expect them to choose collections up front. To this end, and to ensure ergonomic navigation on the site, an external company has been retained with expertise in intuitive web design. The brand design will be that created by Zeezeilen, as agreed at the final TEL steering committee meeting.

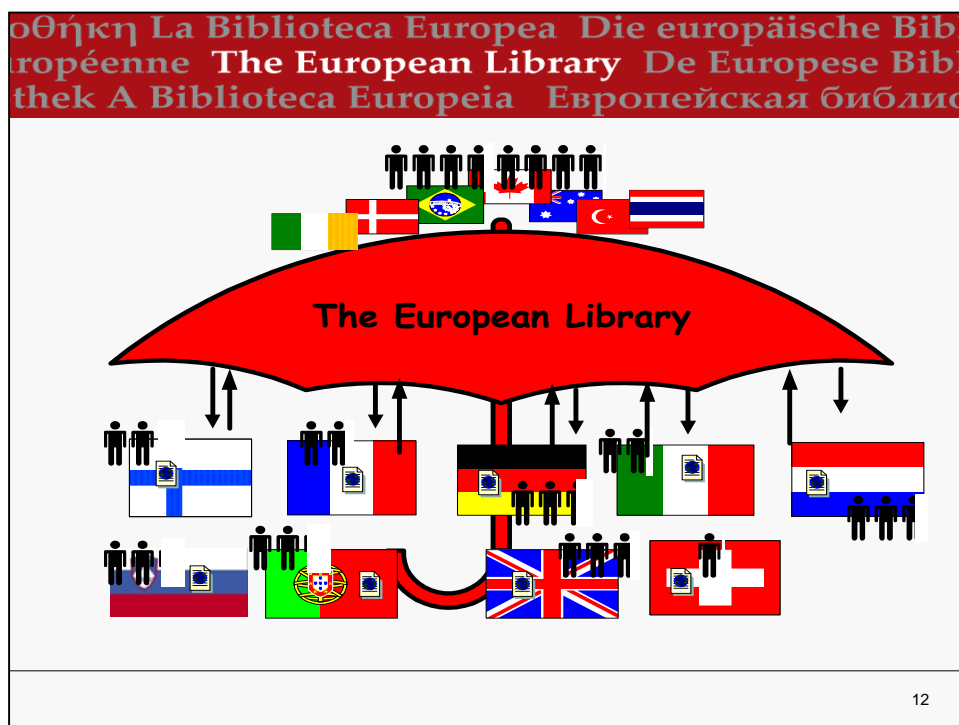
The European Library will be operational on the systems of the Koninklijke Bibliotheek. This reduces the financial risk, should the service not be viable in the longer term, as no investment will have been made in expensive hard and software. It also helps in the maintenance and support of The European Library by KB staff. The downside may be that if the service is hosted elsewhere in future, such an investment will still need to be made.

The European Library will be multilingual. At launch 3 languages of French, German and English will be possible for the guide and most of the website interface. Subsequent releases will look at creating translation tables for the other 30 plus languages of the site contributors and will investigate the feasibility of multilingual search. Some of this may come from the MACS project.

Over the coming months The European Library will develop a strong on and offline marketing and communication campaign. This will be part of the 3 year product plan for the portal, to be written by the end of August 2004.

If the above is achieved, then at launch The European Library should be able to attract the informed citizen and researcher alike. It should provide integrated access to the combined resources of nine national libraries and the ICCU, allow for cross collection searching, enable collection level searching and deliver integrated results. It will also give access to non-digital resources as well as digital and proffer information about the CENL libraries.

In terms of benefits The European Library partners will hopefully gain a significant new route to end-users and an additional showcase for their collections, products and services. Users will get integrated access to those collections, products and services via the Internet - The European Library should be a kind of umbrella that lets the rain in and the condensation out!



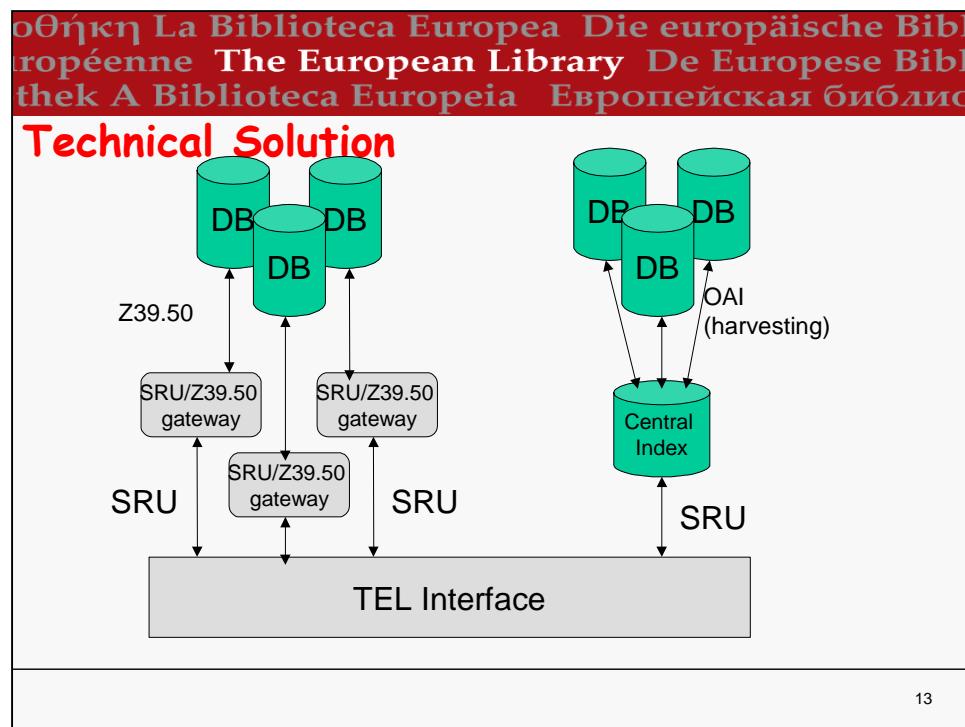
Subsequent Releases for 2005

These will include:

- the incorporation of multilingual searching
- the addition of the LEAF name authority functionality
- investigation of subject thesauri to improve searching accuracy,
- the additions of any modifications to DCMI
- the results of an investigation on how to improve browsing within the site
- possibly a database of registered users

The Technical Solution

Technically The European Library makes use of both new and older technologies. It holds very little by way of data but enables access to a panoply of resource. Using the techniques of OAI harvesting and the SRU and Z39:50 protocols, The European Library makes use of existing library infrastructure to create a central index and a one point access to all the digital and non digital resources of the contributing national libraries of Europe. This has the advantage of being non-threatening to existing library infrastructure and information policies, while achieving the stated aim of bringing together the ability to search across all their resources in one place.



Budget

The proposed budget uses the funding which would have gone into Gabriel plus monies from the full participants for 3 years. The budget is conservative and based on known income not on possible income.

Following the decision made at the first Management Board Meeting of The European Library on June 14, 2004 to use the systems of the KB for the operational service, the

hardware and software in this budget covers the cost of 'leasing' such software etc from the KB for 3 years. This means that The European Library may also take advantage of the security benefits and the maintenance and support of the KB, which should in turn, reduce any financial risk. The area of possible risk in this budget is in the low amounts currently designated for marketing. It would be hoped that any extra funds received could be partly deployed here.

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Budget Proposal					
TEL 3 Year Budget					
'000 €	2004	2005	2006	2007	Total
Staff 3.5 fte's	105	197	202	65	569
Equipment					
Hardware	29	29	29		87
Software	27	27	27		81
Maintenance & Support	10	20	20	10	60
Subtotal					
Website Design/usability	15				
Promotion	5	15	15		
Travel	18	26	26		
Overhead - Office equipment, fax, workstations	10	10	10		
Contingency e.g. more marketing, service devt.	2	7	7		
Total	221	331	336	75	963
Funding					
Full	346	296	296		938
Basic	9	9	9		27
					965
					14

Branding

The European Library is likely to adopt the following look and feel and colours. This was agreed at the Final TEL Steering committee meeting.

Βιβλιοθήκη La Biblioteca Europea Die europäische Bibliothek A Biblioteca Europea Европейская библиотека européenne The European Library De Europese Bibliothek					
Branding					
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The functionality detailed here will also constitute the main apparent functionality of the site. Search across the collections of the full participants, special exhibitions of all the national libraries and a guide to all 43 members of CENL, their libraries and specialities.

The final look and feel of the home page and others will be determined from the results of the usability and navigation exercise currently underway. It is hoped to show the first results of this in a prototype at the CENL annual conference.

Functionality

As mentioned the user will be able to search across all collections submitted by the libraries as well as within a particular chosen collection. They will be able to launch a search on most of the fields held in the metadata. However The European Library is very keen to make sure that the 'informed citizen', who is most likely a google devotee is not put off by having to choose collections up front. It will therefore create a default of searching within the Central Index as the first port of call for these users. The European Library will make use of technology such as LEAF in the background, helping the user to find the correct version of a name without having to look for it.

Other functionality includes the use of a content management system so that libraries may submit and view their own information on their libraries to the guide and an exhibition area, showcasing the exhibitions held in the various libraries.

TEL Project Website

The Office has taken over the TEL Project website from the Deutsche Bibliothek. The Office will maintain and update this site until The European Library is live.

The European Library will have a members' area on the operational site, containing all previous documentation, the Handbook of how to contribute to collections, set up meta-data etc and a frequently asked questions area for librarians and technicians responsible for contributing to the site.

Outstanding Issues

There are at least a couple of unresolved issues - that of whether The European Library should be trademarked or not. Secondly how to achieve true multi linguality so that the user may search in any language to retrieve results in all languages from all collections.

The subscriptions and accession of libraries other than the founders to full participant status needs to be determined and planned.

Current State of Play

Since June 2004, the following has been achieved towards creating an operational service:

1. A definitive domain name has been established TheEuropeanLibrary.org and several other variations such as TheEuropeanLibrary.eu have also been registered. These variations will not be used on publicity. They have been registered to prevent misuse and to ensure that if they are searched on they are redirected to the portal.
2. The project brief has been written & approved by the Management Board. This details the outcomes and requirements of the project.

3. The Project plan written & approved by the Executive Group. This gives the detailed planning and product descriptions for the launch of The European Library.
4. A Request for Proposal for external usability & navigation work was issued to 3 web design companies with expertise in this area and their proposals assessed. A company, Fabrique, was chosen and a workshop organized with members of the Office and some KB colleagues. A functional design has been created and design work will take place over the summer. It is hoped to have a prototype of the site ready in time for presentation at the CENL Annual Conference in Rome in September 2004.
5. A Content Management System for each library to be able to load all the Guide information is being investigated and a system for implementation will be chosen by the end of August.
6. The Technical Working Group had its first meeting, to review the architecture and proposals for new functionality in subsequent releases. The TWG has also reviewed the project plan for launch.
7. 8/9 of The European Library Contacts have been appointed and communicated with the Office.
8. 6 out of 9 Collection Lists for launch have been submitted and will now be added by the libraries to the Collection Description form for Access.
9. A new Collection Description form has been created, tested and placed live on the portal for collection descriptions to be added or modified.

This paper and associated documents are all available on <http://www.europeanlibrary.org/> where you may also sign up to a regular newsletter to learn about progress on The European Library.

Feedback and thoughts on The European Library please give to me or email to the Head of Office, Jill.Cousins@kb.nl