

# 2021 Activity Report -Summary

# Summary of strategic orientations

## A permanent link with the public and new services

Visitor numbers in 2021 were again strongly impacted by the pandemic. The Bibliothèque had to adapt its opening and reception arrangements several times in response to COVID-19 waves: reopening on-site cultural activities in May once the restrictions had been lifted; operating reduced opening hours; running at reduced capacity until the autumn; resuming same-day access to documents held in storage areas from October onwards, etc. In addition, since autumn 2021, the reading rooms at the Richelieu site have been subject to staggered closures, in preparation for the complete reopening of the site in September 2022. On 28 September 2021, French President Emmanuel Macron visited the Richelieu site to mark the end of the second phase of the building's renovation.

As a result, the number of visitors recorded is much lower than before the pandemic, either because of the limited opening hours and capacity or because of the total absence of programming. Less than 380,000 visits were recorded to the reading areas, an increase of 12% compared with 2020, but still well below the usual attendance figures (down 59% compared with 2019). The exhibitions received a total of 140,000 visitors, up 20% on 2020 and the start of the pandemic, but down 50% on the average for the previous three years.

In 2021, the BnF continued its efforts to simplify access – continuing to recommend online registration and reservation – and to increase its range of remote services.

The extended arrangements for remote access to electronic resources put in place in 2020 during lockdown were partially continued in 2021,

and the online streaming of cultural events was stepped up. Events, which had taken place entirely online until May owing to COVID-19 restrictions, went back to being held on-site, although some continued to be held both in-person and online. The number of events available as podcasts (across all platforms) has increased. All events for which images are not essential are now available online. More than 73,000 episodes were downloaded in 2021.

More generally, the audience for the BnF's websites and applications remained at a high level, with almost 45 million visits (down 6% compared with 2020 and during lockdowns, but up 9% compared with 2019). In 2021, Gallica was consulted just over 18.5 million times (down 2% compared with 2020 and up 19% compared with 2019), RetroNews again exceeded 7 million visits and almost 5 million other visits (up 30% compared with 2019) were recorded for virtual exhibitions, testament to renewed and growing interest in this cultural, academic and educational offering.

At the end of 2021, the BnF joined the Services Publics + programme in conjunction with the French Ministry of Culture and the French Interministerial Directorate for Public Transformation, "for closer, simpler and more efficient public services".

## Essential adaptations to ensure continuity of collection management

The year 2021 saw the continuation of various projects concerned with trialling the legal deposit of digital documents. Article 5 of Law no. 2021-1901 "aimed at strengthening the book economy and reinforcing equity and confidence among its players" introduces the legal deposit of digital documents: digital books, music, video, dematerialised multimedia and sound, as well as digital photographs, maps, plans and music scores. The terms and technical provisions of this new legal deposit will be specified in an implementing decree defining the relationship between the BnF and depositors. However, preparatory technical work has already begun, being brought forward to 2021.

For digital books, the deposit of data and metadata by flow is now operational: the input and processing

chain is now in production, from the deposit of the file to its consultation by researchers on BnF premises, including cataloguing and permanent preservation.

The legal deposit of dematerialised sound (LDDS) input chain by flow continued to grow. The distributor Idol remains the main phonogram depositor. What's more, in 2021, the number of dematerialised audio documents deposited for legal deposit exceeded the number of physical audio documents for the first time.

As part of the Shared and Innovative Collection, Preservation and Dissemination of Audio-Visual Heritage (MISAOA) programme run by the BnF and the Centre national du cinéma et de l'image animée (National Centre for Cinema and Animated Images – CNC), an initial experimental version of the DELIA portal ([delia.culture.gouv.fr](http://delia.culture.gouv.fr)), a shared portal for the legal deposit of animated images, was launched on 30 November 2021. With the reception of a first film in real conditions, this launch marked an important stage in the project, which should open up all depositors in spring 2022.

More broadly, and beyond these major technological developments, without which the continuation of legal deposit could not be ensured, the conservation of the collections, both physical and digital, is a major challenge for the institution, both currently and in the future. The year 2021 was marked by the continuation of the priorities defined in the conservation charter and the objectives and performance contract: maintaining a high volume of curative and preventive conservation activity, improving the emergency plan and developing the digitisation of non-current documents and press, physically preparing documents for digitisation, processing for exhibitions, and jointly managing the digital collection. In 2021, the Bibliothèque completed a collection evaluation test on one of its collections, a statistical evaluation method that could be used on other collections and constitute a tool for managing conservation needs.

Most importantly, the BnF took a decisive step in the project to build a new conservation centre. With the storage facilities almost at saturation point, the BnF launched a major project to build a new conservation centre. The institution has been investigating for several years solutions to expand its storage facilities in the medium and long term. On the basis of Location and Dynamic Management of Collections (IGDC) criteria developed and shared with all the collection departments, a Plan for the Future Location of Collections (SIC) was validated for 2021, providing for the most valuable collections and those most in demand by readers to remain at the Paris sites and for the other collections to be kept at a site separate from the reading rooms. In addition, the BnF decided to create a National Press Conservatory on the future site in order to bring together, in the long term, all the press collections that require specific conservation conditions and which will thus constitute a remarkable ensemble, unique in its kind and easy to use. With this in mind, a list of titles intended to form a reference collection within this ensemble was drawn up in 2021, the first major step towards value creation planned for the coming years.

As part of this overall conservation approach, 2021 was to be marked by the selection of the site for the future conservation centre. In 2020, the BnF published a Call for Expressions of Interest (AMI) to find the most appropriate location and received 72 bids from 54 local authorities in seven different French regions. Following a period of in-depth analysis, the Bibliothèque selected Amiens Métropole's proposal, with the support of the City of Amiens, the Somme département and the Hauts-de-France Region: this choice was made official in November 2021 and the agreement that would bind the partners was signed on 4 March 2022.

Within the context of a complete redefinition of international cataloguing standards, the BnF has, for a number of years, been involved in a major project to completely overhaul its catalogue production application. Investigations were continued in 2021 around the Tying Together Works, Expressions, Events and Items (NOEMI) project. 2021 saw the completion of the cycle devoted to the development of unitary cataloguing functions, as well as search results display screens.

Lastly, the year was marked by the addition of several exceptional collections, including national treasures and essential works – Sade, André Breton, Proust, Simone de Beauvoir, Plantu, Charles Gounod, etc. – as well as remarkable donations, such as that of Bérurier noir and the testimonies collected by historian and film-maker Christian Delage after the 2015 Paris attacks. The BnF was also entrusted by the French Ministry of Culture to carry out a major photographic commission entitled "Radioscopy of France: a look at a country in the throes of a health crisis", designed to encourage contemporary creation in the field of photojournalism and press photography. Once the commission has been completed, the BnF will add these works to the national collections in its care and, in spring 2024, will be responsible for promoting them through a retrospective exhibition accompanied by a catalogue, online promotion campaigns and the establishment of partnerships with institutions throughout France.

## Documentary and scientific cooperation on the up

The BnF is committed to developing a large number of national and international cooperation activities that facilitate the sharing of its expertise, the pooling of its infrastructures and the co-production of content.

National cooperation is primarily documentary, via the Union Catalogue of France, and through support for the digitisation of local collections and the creation and consultation of Internet archives, and the provision of shared tools. As such, the collaborative tool Automated Processing for the Development of Research Instruments (TapIR), which was developed as part of the objectives for the co-production of bibliographic data set out in the contract of objectives and performance, enabled 79 different institutions to publish 153 new inventories and update and enhance around 800 others in 2021.

The collective and cooperative dimension of Gallica continued to expand, with fourteen Gallica marque-blanc (Gallica Vanilla) digital libraries online in 2020, including *Yroise*, the digital heritage library in Brest; *Commun Patrimoine*, the digital library of the Plaine Commune regional authority, inaugurated to mark the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Paris Commune; *Nutrisco*, the digital heritage library of Le Havre; the *la Bibliothèque numérique de la statistique publique* (public statistics digital library) administered by the French National Institute for Statistical and Economic Studies (INSEE); and *Héritage des Ponts et chaussées*, the digital library of the École des Ponts Paristech.

By the end of 2021, Gallica had distributed nearly 1.8 million documents from partners, listed in Gallica with individualised source references, a 33% increase on 2020.

The PLATON platform, which provides access to reading material for people with disabilities, is a central tool for collaboration between publishers and accredited organisations. It experienced very dynamic activity, with a total of 158 accredited organisations in 2021 (+23%) and over 1,700 registered publishers (+9%).

International digital cooperation was also further strengthened with the ongoing development of the "Shared Heritage" digital collection, to which 50 partners from 13 different countries contributed: by the end of 2021, with the opening of the *La France aux Amériques* and *France Vietnam* sites, the collection comprised a total of six sites. Laurence Engel, President of the BnF, was also re-elected for a three-year term at the head of the Digital Francophone Network (RFN), which continues its work to safeguard the heritage of French-speaking countries.

Finally, the BnF was involved in preserving and disseminating written heritage. This commitment to solidarity was illustrated by the implementation of a four-year project to preserve and digitally disseminate Iraqi heritage, thanks to the support of the ALIPH foundation for the protection of heritage in conflict zones.

One of the jobs of the Bibliothèque is to run research programs in conjunction with the heritage for which it is responsible. It can be seen in the form of the scientific work performed by its staff, in the

activity of the researchers who are associated with the projects and of partnerships built up with laboratories, "grandes écoles", universities, institutes and libraries, in France and abroad. Such partnerships take the form of conventions between institutions – some twenty were signed in 2021, including a cooperation framework agreement with Sorbonne University – and are given concrete expression on a daily basis through active participation in research networks: Campus Richelieu, alongside the National Institute of History of Art and the National School of Charters, as well as the French research world's systems of excellence, through the BnF's involvement in two University Research Schools (EURs) and a Laboratory of Excellence (LabEx).

During the summer of 2021, as part of its partnership with the Huma-Num Very Large Research Infrastructure (TGIR), the BnF also launched the first call for projects for the BnF DataLab, a space dedicated to the analysis and processing of digital collections, which was inaugurated on 18 October. As a result of this collaboration, five research projects have been selected to be hosted for a year in the BnF DataLab, covering subjects as varied as the study of online virality, the emergence of the notion of environment and the implementation of a processing chain for Gallica's ancient documents.

## Human and financial management aimed at ensuring the continued operation of the Bibliothèque and the well-being of its staff

Despite the pandemic, the BnF took several major steps in 2021 to clarify and modernise its human resources management framework. The institution's new HR policy is based on three objectives:

- ┆ Making career pathways within the institution more attractive and supporting mobility: in addition to the roll-out of a new compensation policy in 2019, the institution developed two framework documents ("Mobility Management Guidelines" and "Promotion and Career Development Management Guidelines") to take better account of the variety of professions and career prospects within the institution. With regard to contract staff in particular, in 2021 the institution established a new – far simpler and improved – pay scale, as well as a new framework defining the rules for the recruitment and renewal of contract staff, taking into account the new tools introduced by the French law on the transformation of the civil service (primarily project contracts and extension of first-time hires to permanent contracts).
- ┆ Promoting diversity and gender equality: as part of measures to promote equality, in 2021 the BnF decided to take steps to compensate for the pay gap between men and women working as heads of department, a job level where the differences were marked. This readjustment work is to continue into 2022. At the same time, the company has prepared its application for diversity certification.
- ┆ Particular attention paid to the prevention of incapacity for work, with the development of a prevention plan.

Against a backdrop of stability in the Bibliothèque's workforce, restored in 2016 after a phase of significant decline, the BnF had to allocate its resources to be able to take on all of its new missions: preparing for the complete reopening of the Richelieu site in September 2022, with a new museum offering; launch of the legal deposit of native digital works, which became effective with the publication of the Darcos Law in December 2021; undertaking a historic project on the press collections, which are among the most sought-after by researchers; preparing for the opening of a new Collection Conservation Centre in Amiens home to a National Press Conservatory.

At the same time, the institution embarked on or continued several large-scale building projects on the Tolbiac site. The most notable was the renovation of the fire safety system, the cost of which, in excess of €30m, is spread between 2020 and 2027.