CERL Strategies 2016–2019

Decision by the CERL Board of Directors on 10 October 2016

Mission Statement

The prime goal of the Consortium of European Research Libraries (CERL) is to facilitate, enhance, and improve the use and impact of printed and manuscript cultural heritage material. CERL raises the awareness of cultural heritage collections and their content among scholars and interested parties in a wide community. CERL is service and partnership oriented by offering its members and the library, archival, and scholarly world at large high quality digital resources and tools using modern technology, by arranging seminars and workshops, and by providing cooperation within its membership and with other library and cultural heritage organisations. CERL concentrates its efforts on all aspects of printed material from the hand-press period and manuscripts and of their digital surrogates.

The goals of CERL can be divided into the following five categories:

Preserve, Improve, Extend and Add to CERL's Digital Resources

CERL started with the HPB database in the early 1990s. Its digital resources and tools have further developed and now include also the Thesaurus, the Portal, MEI, and Provenance. Further additions are continuously discussed.

Strategies

- Facilitate the use of the existing resources and tools by clear descriptions and guides on the CERL website.
- Add further content to the digital resources and develop clear priorities for the work carried out by the database hosts in Göttingen and Uppsala.
- Review continuously the general technical development and separate needs for the digital resources and tools with emphasis on sustainable metadata.
- Be prepared to host new databases.
- Enhance the value of CERL's digital resources and tools for researchers and explore the usefulness of these services in digital humanities.
- Promote the use of the free resources to users also outside the CERL membership and guide the Members and researchers affiliated to them in their exclusive use of the HPB.
- Follow the development of new storage facilities and cooperate with Members and other library organisations in related subjects.
- Draft advisory guidelines for creating digital tools for special topics.

Consolidate, Engage, Help, and Enlarge the Membership and the Wider Network

CERL depends on its Members. CERL has reached high quality standards through the expertise of the institutions, their individual staff, and scholars affiliated to them. It is crucial to know with what they can contribute and which needs they have. More Members give further expertise and a strengthened financial base to improve the services of CERL.

Strategies

- Clarify the benefits of membership in the various forms offered and underline the possibilities either to share the annual cost by forming a group or to be accepted as a cluster member.
- Increase the security cooperation.
- Create a clear communication plan for Member institutions and review the list of Members' Directors and a designated Contact person. The Contact person is encouraged to form groups of CERL interested colleagues within the institution and among scholars using its collections. This group of interested staff and scholars forms a secondary communication list to receive all kinds of general and specialised CERL information and can be a community for feed-back into CERL.
- Treat all membership categories equally.
- Encourage institutions and individuals to suggest improvements in and additions to the services provided by CERL by offering easy ways of expression, either in questionnaires or on a designated website area.
- Promote membership in communication with not yet affiliated institutions, either as single members or forming new groups. Give special attention to countries or regions with few members.
- Make use of social media for communication and knowledge sharing.

Communicate and Meet with Users and Interested Partners

CERL communicates with Members, prospective members and the learned world at large through physical meetings, the website, emails, Skype, and social media.

Strategies

- Intensify the communication with researchers and give special attention to digital humanities research.
- Put emphasis on the various activities: the annual Seminar in connection with the Annual General Meeting in late October; interest group meetings; workshops organized in CERL related subjects; training courses for the use of specific digital resources.
- Measure the result and quality of communication through conventional and social media against the time and cost of administer them.
- Encourage the Working Groups to more intense action and review possibilities to organise local or regional activities by CERL alone or in cooperation with others.
- Make plans to create means of communicating best practices in certain areas.
- Overview continuously the CERL website, both technically and as to its contents, and decide principles for publication on the website.
- Review the need of a closed membership area of the website.
- Explore changes of the biannual and informative CERL News published on the website. Is the periodicity favourable or can it be exchanged and integrated with the continuous publication of news on the website start page?
- Decide clear principles for with whom and on what communication takes place via email lists. Matters on governance and finances can be restricted to the directors and the designated contact person at each member institution.

Extend and Facilitate Networking

The Members and their individual staff make an important and highly skilled network of specialists in the cultural heritage area. In many cases CERL can play a more active role to open both formal and informal channels for such networking and underline the partnership idea behind membership.

Strategies

- Facilitate for Members to spread information to individuals and institutions about CERL, its services and activities.
- Decide rules for a more individual use of the CERL email lists and make these lists known to a wider audience within the membership.
- Encourage the creation of informal interest groups. Is the CERL website a suitable communication platform for such groups or should digital communication be monitored by individual Members?

Oversee Administration and Governance

The administration of CERL is run by a minimal but very efficient staff. The Governance was reviewed by the Members' decision in 2014 of new Rules and Regulations.

Strategies

- Prioritise between more or less engagement in externally financed projects. A small administration is vulnerable. In order to add more staff and create a better working environment CERL was engaged in several externally financed projects.
- Explore further financing possibilities than the Membership fees in order to maintain the administrative quality when extending the activities of CERL. Convince stakeholders and funding bodies of the needs to provide better tools for digital humanities.
- Encourage recruitment to CERL's governing bodies and working groups. CERL is a company under English law, making its governance principles to some extent different from many other library organisations. The division of recruitment to the Board of Directors and the Coordinating Committee – managerial experience and expertise in cultural heritage subjects – is not exact but is an element in the two bodies' different ways of discussing and acting. The division has served CERL well and widely broadened the influence of Members and their staff. However, every organisation or institution can benefit from an open discussion on its principles of governance.

CONSORTIUM OF EUROPEAN RESEARCH LIBRARIES

Accessing the record of Europe's book heritage

Mission Statement

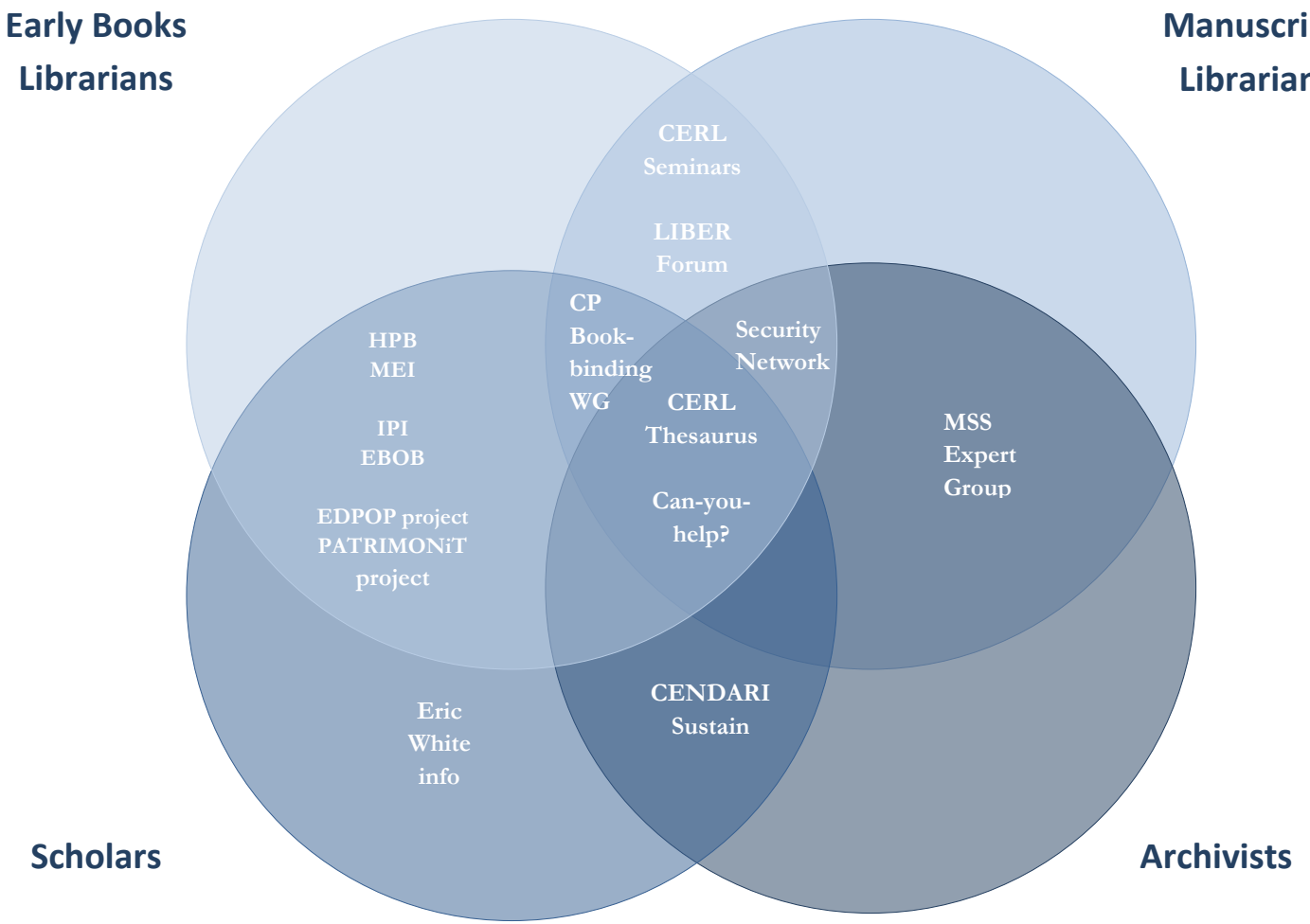
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CERL's Goals and Strategies 2016-2019

- To preserve, improve and grow CERL's electronic resources
- To provide advocacy for and facilitate networking among cultural heritage communities
- To influence stakeholders and funding bodies
- To consolidate, engage and enlarge the membership



CERL Activities and our target audiences



Preserve, improve, and grow CERL's digital resources

HPB DATABASE

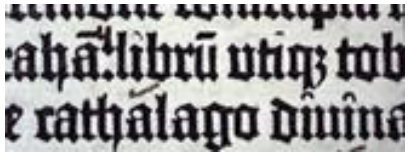
1. Shorten the time that contributing institutions have to wait to see their data added to the HPB
2. Support the DH community through providing convenient access to HPB data
3. Work with The European Library to integrate relevant records from their National Library community
4. Work with VZG towards a more visual presentation of HPB data

CERL THESAURUS

1. Migrate to the new CERL database hosting environment
2. Shorten the time that contributing institutions have to wait to see their data added to the CT
3. Enrich the data with information from non-library sources (e.g. biographies, portraits, coats of arms etc)
4. Improve search options and result set display of the CT (e.g. searching by geographical regions, affiliations, time periods etc.)

CERL PORTAL

1. Review the technological platform of the CP
2. Identify possibilities for the CP, in terms of focus, development and presentation to user base (e.g. conduct an environmental scan)
3. Future proof the management of the service



1. Host the Material Evidence in Incunabula database; incl. enhancements coming from the 15cBOOKTRADE project
2. Ensure that all achievements of this project are embedded in CERL when the project ends
3. Pull all incunabula activities of CERL together in the Incunabula Working Group
4. Incunabula Working Group to coordinate further integration of digital resources for incunabula (e.g. GW)

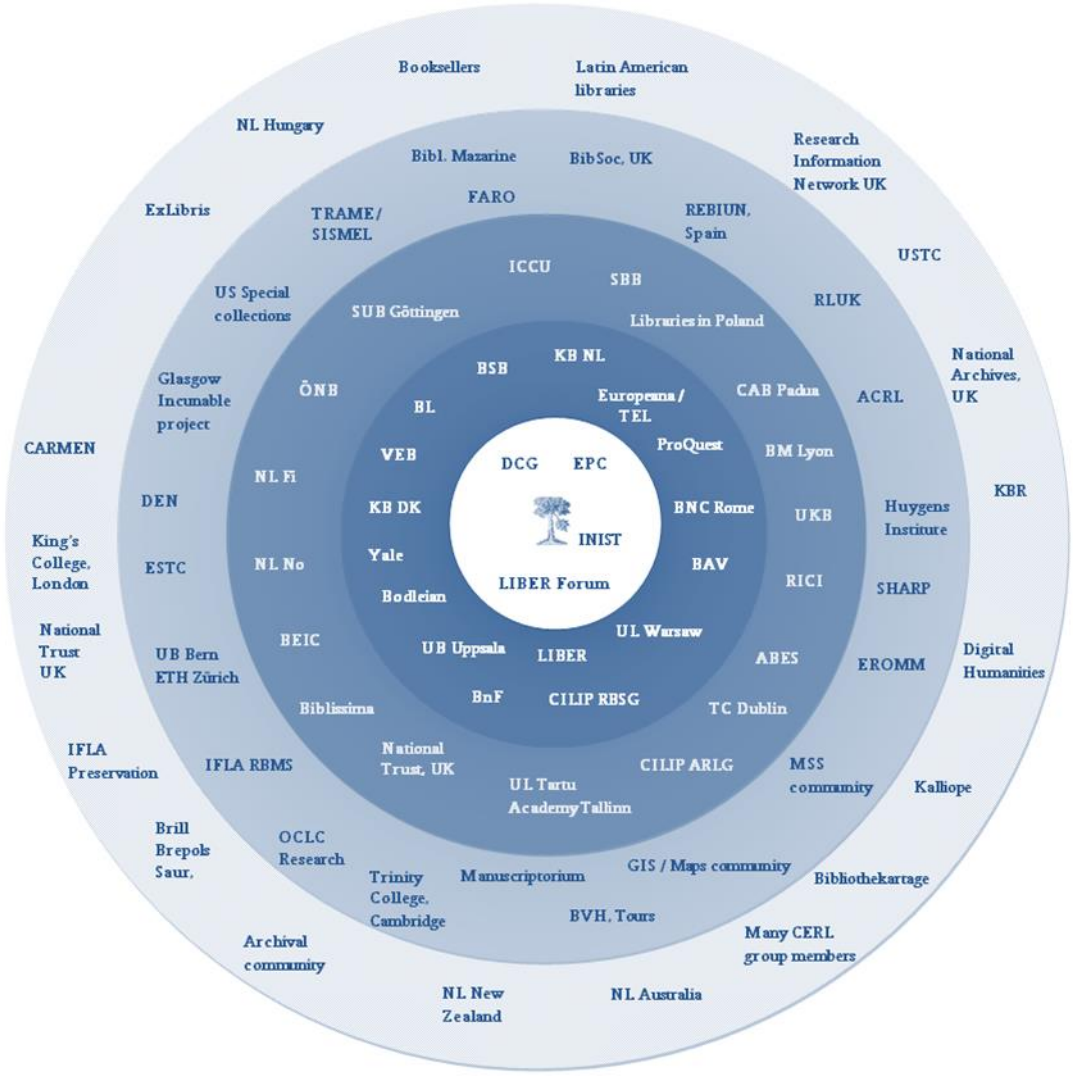
PROVENANCE

1. Develop integrated access to images that record provenance, both newly created and those in existing image repositories.
2. Collaborate closely with the Book Bindings Working Groups as they share many aims
3. Explore development of a provenance recording service for post-incunabula materials based on HPB bibliographical records (e.g. modelled on MEI).

Hosting datasets created by third parties

CERL has an infrastructure and the supporting interface to facilitate hosting of third-party datasets, and offers this service to the early books and manuscripts community. CERL will need to charge a hosting fee for each dataset to cover costs, and it goes without saying that the importance of this activity lies in the potential connections between datasets that CERL will wish to exploit. CERL will publish a refined policy to outline what we will host on which terms, and will increase the existing portfolio of hosted datasets.

Provide advocacy for and facilitate networking among cultural heritage communities



As per our mission, CERL is partnership oriented. We work together with many institutions and organisations, and will continue to do so.

The intensity of the collaboration fluctuates over time; the illustration aims to highlight the range of institutions liaising with CERL, rather than the exact intensity of that relationship at this moment in time.

In addition to strengthening existing partnership, we aim to widen the spheres of collaboration by liaising with

- The Digital Humanities community, through DARIAH-EU
- Curators and Researchers working with non-European written heritage and archive
- The IFLA Rare Books and Manuscripts Group
- The RDA community
- The IIIF community
- The Judaica community

Influence stakeholders and funding bodies



CERL will intensify its engagement with funding bodies, both as an applicant and as a representative of the rare books and manuscript community, well-placed to advise on the needs of the sector and the most effective application of funds.

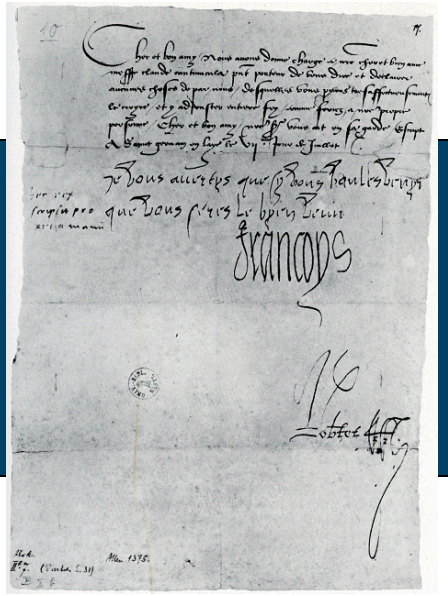
With the Digital Humanities community CERL will continuously explore the usefulness of its services and enhance the value of these services accordingly. The aim is to secure funding to further develop CERL, delivering on a programme of work that will see an enhanced infrastructure for researchers which fully integrates CERL's electronic resources, and offers a sustainable environment for their research data.

CERL wishes to expand its CERL Grants programme. For this purpose CERL will seek external funding, so that as an organisation CERL may act as the coordinator and administrator for issuing grants.

CERL will introduce Exploration Teams, to undertake time-limited investigations to determine whether and if so, how, CERL could be active in certain areas. Examples are Oriental Collections, Music, Maps, Archives, etc. Each time the remit for the Exploration Team will be to explore what is done elsewhere, what the lacunae are, and how CERL could/should contribute.

CERL's Unique Selling Points

- Well-defined remit: our cultural heritage in early printed books and manuscript materials
- Thriving network of specialists in institutions with rich Special Collections
- Efficient exchange of knowledge and best practices
- Joint development of services for librarians and scholars
- Convenient access to trusted data, presented in a meaningful context



Consolidate, engage and enlarge the membership

CERL has reached high quality standards through the expertise of the institutions, their individual staff, and scholars affiliated to them. We wish to increase the interaction with our members to further capitalise on the expertise available in the CERL Network, and think the working groups are a good vehicle for this interaction. Existing Working Groups (see below) will be further integrated in CERL, through regular meetings with the Executive Manager, the creation of annual work plans and the delivery thereof. The Working Groups will regularly present their work at public sessions, normally coordinated to take place at the time of the CERL meetings in March or October. In the coming years, the strategic aims for the Working Groups are:

Security Networking Group

- Work towards a funding application of a research project on the applicability of nanotechonology and DNA technologies in collection security for library collections.
- Organise two conferences in the period covered by this plan; possible theme includes insider theft
- Explore whether there is a market for tailored workshops on collection security for CERL members
- Explore whether there is a need for a post-theft support system (and how this can be financed)



Manuscripts Expert Group

- Further strengthen collaboration between manuscript experts in libraries, archives and research.
- Work with scholars to establish relevant and future oriented data offers, beyond pure access to data bases or portals.
- Work with scholars to enhance the presentation of materials in the CERL Portal e.g. by contextualising objects, harnessing the potentials offered by the Semantic Web.



Bookbinding Working Group

- Focus on greater advocacy for publishing (images and descriptions of) book bindings on the internet
- Prepare instructions on how to publish these image (incl. varying level of detail in the descriptions, and suggested standards for digitising bindings)
- Create an inventory of available rubbings collections , and describe how these have been structured
- Work with collections to implement the LIGATUS glossary for describing bindings



Promotion Working Group

- Prepare advice how the topics of the CERL seminars and workshops align with the CERL Strategy and are kept alive after the event.
- Explore whether CERL seminar themes might be aligned with IFLA/RBMS events or DH conference/workshops.
- Review the publishing format of the bi-annual Newsletter



Seminars and Workshops

The CERL programme of workshops and seminars will be organised in countries where there is the potential for a CERL membership, and the themes are aligned with the CERL Strategy. Suggested themes include

- How materials with roots outside Europe influenced European intellectual growth and thinking.
- Cataloguing: workflow, formats, cataloguing rules like RDA, cataloguing platforms, special requirements for early printed materials and manuscripts (e.g. recording provenance).
- What is the future of the library catalogue? In various institutions it may serve as library management tool, the file for stock keeping, a research tool, our gateway to LOD, or all of the above simultaneously. Does it cope?
- Libraries and archives – explore integrated access, early printed books held in archives, best practices in the one that would benefit the other.
- IIIF and CERL. The obvious connection regards provenance images, but other CERL services could perhaps also be made to benefit.
- Funding for and long-term sustainability of developments in the cultural heritage sector.

Membership benefits

Members of CERL receive access to the following databases:

- CERL's Heritage of the Printed Book Database, with institution-wide access (by password or IP recognition) for searching, off-campus access for the institution's registered users, download records for derived cataloguing, and Z39.50 and SRU access for other specialised uses
- the CERL Thesaurus, freely available through its own interface, but also as LOD under the terms of Etalab's Open Licence, which can be considered equivalent to ODC-BY and CC-BY 2.0.
- the CERL Portal for manuscripts and early printed materials, freely available through its own interface, with integrated CT assisted searching.
- the Material Evidence in Incunabula database (MEI), freely available both for recording provenance information and searching the database.
- the Can-You-Help? facility, harnessing an active community glad to assist in the identification of unknown provenance marks
- a growing number of databases hosted by CERL, such as the ISTC, the Early Book Owners in Britain, the *Index Possessorum Incunabulorum* and the Scottish Book Trade Index.

Members of the Consortium are invited to contribute bibliographical or authority records to the CERL resources, thereby increasing the visibility of their collections in its appropriate, specialised context. Members have the opportunity to participate in the development of CERL's electronic and published resources, through a range of Working Groups. They have access to CERL's community of rare-books specialists through free seminars and workshops. CERL Single Members may apply to have up to 15 cluster libraries associated with their membership, for free. Cluster libraries have access to the HPB Database.

CONSORTIUM OF EUROPEAN RESEARCH LIBRARIES