

CENL Strategic Plan 2023 - 2027

The relevance of national libraries for society

CENL's Vision

Europe's national libraries are world-leading memory institutions, playing important roles in the intellectual, educational, cultural, social and economic development of the continent, countries and communities they serve.

Together we form a strong professional community, promoting our common purposes and shared values of collaboration and partnership.

CENL's Mission

CENL's mission is to advance the cause of Europe's national libraries, working better together and achieving more than we can do alone.

To engage with national library audiences and understand their needs

- CENL will further explore the changing environment for library users and wider audiences, to understand the impact of changing collections, spaces and technologies and to help CENL members embed this knowledge into their own strategies.

To build capacity and professional expertise in CENL members

- CENL will continue to support its members to grow as organisations, to develop innovative and relevant new services and to develop highly skilled staff.
- CENL will lead debate on the changing role of national libraries in a rapidly changing world. We will build a strong network of experts across a wide range of professional areas to share knowledge, experiences and to learn from each other.

To advocate for CENL members and libraries in general

- CENL will be the leading advocate at European level for national libraries.
- CENL will work to promote the interests of CENL member libraries and to support activities at European and national levels which will help all libraries deliver better services to their communities.
- CENL will develop strategic partnerships to promote its members' interests with organisations which share its vision and purposes.

The relevance of national libraries for society

National libraries do not only have relevance on a national level but also for Europe as a whole: National libraries safeguard the European Cultural Heritage in printed and digital form.

The war in Ukraine shows how important it is to give the public access to knowledge and information. National libraries play a crucial role in offering a broad spectrum of information sources which empowers their audiences to understand, compare and evaluate this information.

While digital transformation continues to gather pace and have major impact across all aspects of the work of national libraries, many members now have mature national digital strategies in which they play a leading role.

Many members are fundamentally changing how they operate and deliver value to their audiences. Digital transformation is a cultural change that requires members to continually challenge the status quo, experiment, and get comfortable with failure.

Many members are seeking to develop the role they play in civic society and to engage with wider public audiences beyond traditional researchers and students. This has stimulated a broad interest in the redesign and repurposing of physical spaces, as well as generating ideas for innovation in services and public programmes.

Many members are developing new relationships – formally and informally – with university libraries, with public libraries, with museums and archives, enabling them to take on broader responsibilities and new purposes.

This can only be achieved in networks and cooperation. CENL has been and will be a hub for communication and exchange so that members are enabled and supported in their activities.

The strategic plan for 2023-2027 takes the previous strategy as a valid basis and aims to further strengthen and support CENL members in these priority areas:

- Support national libraries to increase their impact and to be strong networked organisations
- Develop as cultural memory institutions of the past and the future
- Strengthen CENL as a community

Priority areas for action 2023-2027

1. Supporting national libraries to increase their impact and to be strong networked organisations

- We will invest in appropriate training and development opportunities for our members
- We will continue our grant giving and bursary programmes to enable members to identify and shape their own priority areas for development (e.g. marketing strategies and project creation)
- We will offer relevant and interesting opportunities for discussion and debate on key issues through our annual conference and other events (e.g. management, innovation, sustainability, digital transformation)
- We will develop CENL policy on advocacy and lobbying on behalf of CENL members in relation to wider library and information society issues like national cultural policies
- We will continue to identify and partner, where appropriate, with other relevant organisations working to promote the impact and strength of libraries and cultural organisations, including international organisations such as UNESCO, IFLA or CDNL and European organisations such as LIBER, CERL, Europeana and EBLIDA

2. Developing as cultural memory institutions of the past and the future

- We will share information, identify best practices and support members to improve professional standards of maintenance and management of our collections in all formats
- We will support members in their development of digital collections and access services, by supporting skills exchange and collaboration in areas such as mass digitisation of heritage collections, understanding the relationship between digital and physical collections, collecting cultural heritage of tomorrow, use of innovative technologies, copyright reform and digital rights management
- We will encourage and facilitate knowledge sharing in relation to research engagement, innovation, digital library infrastructure and interoperability
- We will encourage and facilitate knowledge-sharing in relation to legislative and regulatory changes affecting national library services and collections, engaging as appropriate with other stakeholders in the information sector to explore areas of mutual benefit
- We will support CENL members as they develop innovate services to meet the evolving needs of a wide range of audiences, including the general public, learners, researchers and cultural visitors.
- We will support service development across the CENL membership by surveying members' service strategies and developing opportunities for CENL members to share knowledge and expertise
- We will explore innovative use and design of physical spaces to facilitate new services and to engage diverse audiences

- We will share best practices on development of effective cultural programmes of exhibitions and events, both physical and digital, to improve access to European cultural heritage.
- We will explore ways to protect endangered cultural heritage and share best practices.

3. Strengthen CENL as a community organisation

- We will keep our governance models, our programme of work and ways of working under review to ensure CENL works effectively for all its members
- We will ensure CENL subgroups work effectively by reviewing their remit and terms of reference
- We will update and improve member contacts to ensure we communicate effectively with members and also strengthen the peer to peer network
- We will develop an annual communications and consultation plan each year to ensure that all members are able to participate effectively in decision making
- We will continuously develop the CENL website to ensure it is an effective information source for members and anyone seeking information on Europe's national libraries
- We will develop plans to use social media and other media channels in support of CENL collectively and of individual member libraries

CENL: By Members - For Members!