

39th CENL Annual General Meeting 16-17 June 2024 – Edinburgh, Scotland Minutes

Executive Committee Present:

- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| 1) Frank Scholze | Chair (Germany) |
| 2) Gilles Pécout | Vice Chair (France) |
| 3) Karin Grönvall | Treasurer (Sweden) |
| 4) Sara Lammens | Executive Committee Member (Belgium) |
| 5) Tomáš Foltýn | Executive Committee Member (Czech Republic) |
| 6) Ivanka Stričević | Executive Committee Member (Croatia) |
| 7) Susanne Oehlschläger | CENL Secretary (Germany) |

Members Present:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| 8) Anna Chulyan | Armenia |
| 9) Michaela Mayr | Austria (Proxy for Johanna Rachinger) |
| 10) Kalina Ivanova | Bulgaria |
| 11) Bente Skovgaard Kristensen | Denmark |
| 12) Martin Öövel | Estonia |
| 13) Kimmo Tuominen | Finland |
| 14) Chrysa Nikolaou | Greece |
| 15) Dávid Rózsa | Hungary |
| 16) Örn Hrafnkelsson | Iceland |
| 17) Audrey Whitty | Ireland |
| 18) Dagnija Balčiņa | Latvia |
| 19) Daniel Quaderer | Liechtenstein |
| 20) Aušrinė Žilinskienė | Lithuania |
| 21) Claude D. Conter | Luxembourg |
| 22) Wilma van Wezenbeek | Netherlands |
| 23) Jovica Nikchevski | North Macedonia |
| 24) Trond Myklebust | Norway (Proxy for Aslak Sira Myhre) |
| 25) Tomasz Makowski | Poland |
| 26) Diogo Ramada Curto | Portugal |
| 27) Vladimír Pištalo | Serbia |
| 28) Radoslav Maslák | Slovakia (Proxy for Eva Augustínová) |
| 29) Jana Kolar | Slovenia |
| 30) José Luis Bueren Gómez-Acebo | Spain (Proxy for Óscar Arroyo Ortega) |
| 31) Damian Elsig | Switzerland |
| 32) Taner Beyoğlu | Türkiye |
| 33) Rebecca Lawrence | UK/England |
| 34) Amina Shah FRSE FRSA | UK/Scotland |
| 35) Timothy James Janz | Vatican City State (Proxy for Don Mauro Mantovani) |

Proxy Voting Forms Received in Absentia:

- | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 36) Lyubov A. Dubrovina | Ukraine (Proxy for Frank Scholze) |
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In attendance:

- | | |
|------------------|----------|
| Frédéric Lemmers | Belgium |
| Bojidara Ilieva | Bulgaria |

Jagoda Ille
Zuzana Bolerazka
Mona Lehtinen
Hélène Bergès
Isabelle Nyffeneger
Jean-François Roseau
Aidas Sinkevicius
Carlo Blum
Kim Krier
Elsbeth Kwant
Geertrui Verbraak
Zorica Jakovleska Spirovska
Ines Vodopivec
Julia Konopka-Żońnierczuk
Tamara Butigan-Vučaj
Viliam Polonec
Linda Lindström
Orhan Açıkgöz
Marcie Hopkins
Liz Jolly
Jackie Cromarty
Susanne Munro
Rhodri Llwyd Morgan

Apologies:

Johanna Rachinger
Karim Tahirov
George Hadjigeorgiou
Konstantine Gamsakhurdia
Elisabetta Sciarra
Dr Stefano Campagnolo
Cheryl Falzon
Aslak Myhre
Eva Augustínová
Lyubov A. Dubrovina
Don Mauro Mantovani

CENL Secretariat in attendance:

Annika Wenzel

Invited external speakers:

Prof Paul Gooding
Richard Ovenden OBE MA FRSA FSA FRHistS FRs
Prof Melissa Terras MBE FREng

Croatia
Czech Republic
Finland
France
France
France
Lithuania
Luxembourg
Luxembourg
Netherlands
Netherlands
North Macedonia
Norway
Poland
Serbia
Slovakia
Sweden
Türkiye
UK/England
UK/England
UK/Scotland
UK/Scotland
UK/Wales (invited guest)

Austria (Proxy Michaela Mayr)
Azerbaijan
Cyprus
Georgia
Italy, Florence
Italy, Rome
Malta
Norway (Proxy Trond Myklebust)
Slovakia (Proxy Radoslav Maslik)
Ukraine (Proxy Frank Scholze)
Vatican City State (Proxy Timothy James Janz)

(minutes)

DAY 1 – MONDAY, 16 June

1. Words of welcome from Edinburgh Futures Institute

Caroline Parkinson from the Edinburgh Futures Institute welcomed all members and said that the institutes' mission was to work with other cultural organisations from Europe.

2. Words of welcome from Chair and Host

Amina Shah thanked the institute and welcomed all CENL members. She said they should all be aware of the history of cultural institutions, such as the past of this building. She was excited to see what AI meant to everyone and looked forward to hearing all contributions.

CENL Chair Frank Scholze also welcomed all members to the 39th Annual General Meeting (AGM). He asked everyone to take a moment and remember the late director of the National Library of Lithuania, Andris Vilks, who passed this February. He introduced today's schedule. They will start with the business meeting part including the essential votes, which are possible as with more than half of the members present the meeting has a quorum.

3. Approval of the minutes of the 38th CENL AGM 2024

Paper 02

The minutes were approved by everyone.

4. Matters arising from Minutes

During the last AGM the new CENL Executive Committee (EC) was instated. The Dutch notary accommodated the Secretariat during this legal process. They did, generously, not charge CENL for their work. The Secretariat also provided the proceedings of the last AGM in a publication about e-legal deposit in national libraries.

5. CENL Annual Report

Paper 03

Frank Scholze introduced the members of the new Executive Committee (EC), all of whom were present, and invited participants to engage with them during the meeting. Since the last AGM, the EC has met three times: once in Vienna, where they bid farewell to Hans Petschar, and twice via Zoom. He also presented the CENL Secretariat and its work, and shared pictures from the AGM in Warsaw, which he recalled as a productive and inspiring meeting with many new ideas.

The Chair briefly outlined the CENL grants and bursaries programme, highlighting the recently awarded EKN and SKE recipients. In response to inflation, the EC decided to raise the SKE fund to €1,500 starting next year.

The network groups were described as very active. Instead of delivering reports at the AGM, they produced video reports this year, which are available on the CENL website. The current terms of the network groups will end on 31 December 2025, after which new groups will have the opportunity to apply.

The two CENL Dialogue Forums collaborated with external stakeholders over the past year, and their reports are also available on the website.

Finally, the Chair welcomed 14 new CENL members and encouraged all participants to connect with them.

6. Treasurer's Report

Paper 04

The Treasurer Karin Grönvall stated the financial situation to be very stable and relaxed. The audit for last year was passed. All members will have to vote on the budget for 2026.

She presented the cash balance account, which was about 700,000 euros at the end of 2024. Their approach to moderately overspend during 2024 was found to be appropriate and good by the auditors.

CENL - ING	Bank Balance
Opening bank balance as at 01.01.2024	720.939,38 €
Total income	116.938,15 €
Less expenses	132.014,86 €
Bank balance as at 31.12.2024	705.862,67 €
Decrease in cash and cash equivalents	- 15.076,71 €

	Income			Expenses		
	Budget	Balance 31.12.24	Balance remaining	Budget	Balance 31.12.24	Balance remaining
CENL Membership Fee 2024*	114.450,00 €	111.800,00 €	2.650,00 €			
CENL Membership Fee 2023 (Spain)**	- €	4.000,00 €	- 4.000,00 €			
Returned payments (Ireland, Azerbaijan)	- €	1.138,15 €	- 1.138,15 €			
Total Income***		116.938,15 €				
Reserves	47.050,00 €	15.076,71 €	-31.973,29 €			
	161.500,00 €	132.014,86 €	-29.485,14 €			
AGM Financial support				13.000,00 €	10.838,11 €	2.161,89 €
Travel costs speakers				4.000,00 €	545,93 €	3.454,07 €
Skills and knowledge SKE - Bursary 2024				10.000,00 €	3.529,03 €	6.470,97 €
SKE - Network groups 2024 exchange				15.000,00 €	9.195,01 €	5.804,99 €
SKE - Hidden Stories 2023				- €	800,00 €	- 800,00 €
Erland Kolding Nielsen Grant 2024				15.000,00 €	4.617,38 €	10.382,62 €
CENL website maintenance costs				8.000,00 €	6.192,92 €	1.807,08 €
Bank charges and transfer fees				4.000,00 €	1.325,72 €	2.674,28 €
Audit and legal costs				12.000,00 €	12.933,10 €	- 933,10 €
CENL Secretariat				78.000,00 €	78.000,00 €	- €
Other office costs				2.500,00 €	2.899,51 €	- 399,51 €
Returned payments (Ireland, Azerbaijan)				- €	1.138,15 €	- 1.138,15 €
Total				161.500,00 €	132.014,86 €	29.485,14 €

The budget for 2025 is an ongoing process, like in 2024, the Secretariat will follow the agreement to moderately overspend over a period of 10 years to decrease the surplus balance.

	Income			Expenses		
	Budget	Balance 30.04.25	Balance remaining	Budget	Balance 30.04.25	Balance remaining
CENL Membership Fee 2025	114.450,00 €	98.135,00 €	16.315,00 €			
Other	- €	- €	- €			
Reserves	49.550,00 €	1.156,72 €	50.706,72 €			
Total	164.000,00 €	96.978,28 €	67.021,72 €			
AGM Financial Support				13.000,00 €	- €	13.000,00 €
Travel costs speakers				4.000,00 €	- €	4.000,00 €
Skills and knowledge exchange				10.000,00 €	- €	10.000,00 €
SKE - Bursary 2025				15.000,00 €	575,50 €	14.424,50 €
SKE - Network groups 2025				- €	5.453,39 €	- 5.453,39 €
SKE - Network groups 2024				- €	1.148,58 €	- 1.148,58 €
SKE - Hidden Stories				15.000,00 €	7.928,00 €	7.072,00 €
EKN grant 2025				- €	3.149,80 €	- 3.149,80 €
EKN 2024				8.000,00 €	- €	8.000,00 €
CENL website maintenance costs				4.000,00 €	696,51 €	3.303,49 €
Bank charges and transfer fees				14.500,00 €	9,25 €	14.490,75 €
Audit and legal costs				78.000,00 €	78.000,00 €	- €
CENL Secretariat				2.500,00 €	17,25 €	2.482,75 €
Other office costs						
Total				164.000,00 €	96.978,28 €	67.021,72 €

For the proposed budget in 2026, everything will be the same as in 2025, but it will include increasing the SKE grant from 10,000 to 15,000 euros (see point 5.)

	Income	Expenses
	Budget	Budget
CENL Membership Fee 2026	114.450,00 €	
Other	- €	
Reserves	55.050,00 €	
Total	169.500,00 €	
AGM Financial support		13.000,00 €
Travel costs speakers		4.000,00 €
Skills and knowledge exchange		15.000,00 €
Bursary programs		15.000,00 €
CENL Network Groups (3 groups á 5k €)		15.000,00 €
Erland Kolding Nielsen Grant (3 x 5k €)		15.000,00 €
CENL website maintenance costs		8.000,00 €
Bank charges and transfer fees		4.000,00 €
Audit and legal costs		14.500,00 €
CENL Secretariat		78.000,00 €
Other office costs		3.000,00 €
Total		169.500,00 €

All members voted unanimously for the proposed budget for 2026.

7. CENL Action Plan and Communications

The Secretary Susanne Oehlschläger presented the CENL website, where the Secretariat publishes news and important documents for all members. She reminded the members that all CENL member library staff can access the website and the member's area with their library email address. Statistics about the traffic on the website showed that it has increased about 46 percent, probably due to more news content being published.

As user experience is important to the Secretariat and, therefore, the website, the homepage is currently being refreshed and updated. The popularity of the newsletter is growing as well, nevertheless the Secretary asked the members to remind their staff to sign up, as it is a great way to stay updated about the CENL member libraries.

The Secretariat has been posting news content on Twitter/X. The number of followers and impressions per tweet has dropped, as well as the number of accounts of national libraries. It led the Secretariat to consider a new social media channel, and they started a profile on LinkedIn in late April. The followers are steadily increasing, and all members were invited to follow the account.

The Secretary presented the administrative work that happens all year. She thanked Sabina Henn for the financial work. The CENL membership fees are currently being reviewed, there will also be another round of “Looking back and ahead” this year (short video message from each member).

Frank Scholze then announced that the National Library of Sweden will host the AGM in 2027. He noted that the EC had received six excellent applications and, in aiming for regional balance and considering whether applicants had previously hosted an AGM, the EC unanimously selected Stockholm. He encouraged all applicants to submit again for 2028. **8. Keynote: Upholding Library Values in a Tech Industry World**

Prof Melissa Terras, MBE FREng

Libraries are currently experiencing huge changes and have to stick to their beliefs and values. Melissa Terras talked about how to keep up those values when faced with technical developments, which do not consider libraries. The information environment and democracy itself must be defended by libraries. Having studied art history and literature, she went to do an PhD in engineering, specialising in AI computer systems.

Everyone has values, the three main types are economic (money), social and semiotic (sign value and indication), as well as context dependant types of value. The economic type is most relevant in the world and tends to overshadow the others. The attending members often have mission statements in which they state their national library’s values. She read some of them and found them rather difficult to understand. They were about knowledge, culture, accessibility and inclusion, with a focus on anything digital. To summarise, those are all social and not economic values. AI was not mentioned much at all.

Values of AI and Tech companies, like OpenAI, prioritise unlimited access, free information and mistrust authority (national libraries in this context). Those values are profit orientated. This conflict of values between libraries and the tech industry needs to be understood and libraries have to react.

The library sector has to realise that AI is not a separate problem but connected to everything that libraries do. They should not rely on government support. Governments believe in the economic profits of AI and will support AI in short-term oriented decisions. They cooperate with the tech industry and not with libraries. Managers and boards need to be briefed regularly on new AI regulations. For example, copyright is an inconvenience to the AI business model. Thereby, libraries, especially legal deposit national libraries, stand in their way.

Libraries could build their own AI tools and be careful with whom to partner and share access with. She presented Transkribus as a positive example. Advance text recognition is used on a regular basis in libraries. Transkribus was funded by EU projects and in cooperation with libraries and archives. Launched in 2017, it improved continuously. Today it is located with the SCE (European Cooperative Society) and is co-owned by 258 members from 36 countries, including many libraries. Both admin and processing is powered with green energy, its profits are re-invested in the infrastructure. Recently they re-launched the website and branding, focused on social values with AI. They do not depend on the major AI providers, but still need resources. There has to be a balance between being as open as possible and as closed as needed to protect oneself from the big AI companies. For that a strict ethical framework is needed.

Libraries should build a community of shared goals, as they all have similar AI problems. The time is now to own this AI development without relying on OpenAI. There need to be rules for integration of AI generated content. It should be visible to future users when AI was used and for what. The IFLA interlibrary loan system and OCLC catalogues are based in the US. Libraries need to ask themselves whether they could get their data back at any moment. Likewise, in case of war and physical threats, how could they make sure to shield their digitised content, especially in case of harmful AI attacking this data. She ended her presentation by motivating everyone to: “Be more library and enact your social values in the face of AI”.

Melissa responded to a question that she does not believe the current library systems to be entirely suitable for AI content. Libraries need to inform the providers about what they need. “Data lifeboats” should help cultural institutions to save and protect their data when threatened. Another question concerned whether the big AI companies could be supporters instead. She responded that there need to be clear guidelines and not to go into any cooperation naïve.

Frank Scholze agreed with the importance of striking that balance. He also supported the idea of the collaborate effort to achieve this. He thanked Melissa for the keynote and invited the members to talk about it during the following speed dating session.

9. Keynote: AI in the National Library: Thinking Fast and Slow

Prof Paul Gooding

Paul Gooding started by stating that his presentation would address the question of how to ground oneself around and adapt to the hype of new technologies, especially AI. He has worked for over a decade with national libraries, recently as an AI adviser.

Explaining the title of his keynote, he told the audience that he took up running while researching for his PhD to get out of the house. When trying to improve one’s running time, one cannot run fast all the time, but only 20-30 percent of the time. One has to slow down as well as speed up to be productive. This can be used as an analogy for working with AI. Artificial Intelligence can be defined as machines performing tasks that normally require human intelligence and learning from data to do so. National libraries have been familiar with aspects of AI since the 1970s and while it’s much more relevant today, the fundamental debate is decades old. National libraries need to leverage new technologies in a way that works for them and their communities. They need to face the challenge how to implement technologies that actually help their users.

He showcased this issue from some of his projects. One was about historic newspapers in the digital age and how they were being accessed by users. Academics on temporary contracts were left out once their access was over. Likewise, people working in areas where institutions could not afford the subscriptions or technology. Another project was “Digital Library Futures”. He found users to be very interested in the development of the implantation of e-legal deposit and supported the new laws.

National libraries need a user centred approach and involve them in the process. They need to give them sovereignty over the materials they produce.

Another project was centring indigenous incentives for AI development in libraries. Indigenous knowledge is incredibly diverse. Cultural literacy is required to store it appropriately and when using AI for this, the producers of the stored knowledge need to be respected and involved in the process. This includes the right to know, participation, cultural safety, consent, advocacy and cooperation. For example, indigenous communities they were resistant to AI implantation and wanted libraries to

invest in servers which are on indigenous land, to keep the data local and sovereign. For them, this means the right to have a say on how their materials are being used. They want to be in charge of their stories. He trusted that the communities will see opportunities that will work for their benefit and all can work together to achieve those.

For the projects, there was always time pressure, as there were complex issues and AI moves so fast. He reminded everyone that time spend with technology can also be slow and used to understand it, to reconsider the principles behind it. Technology tends to make people more efficient, which is not bad, but this “Fast AI” does not let them reflect. The idea of “Slow AI” is to take time to actively engage with it. It is community driven and time productive. The library sector can apply this to its interaction with their users.

He continued with the topic of Extractive AI and Data Capitalism. The AI hype currently observed is quite “capitalist”. The digital landscape is a myth made up by technology and politics – which no one could not have imagined decades earlier. When the CD-ROM was introduced, it was seen as revolutionary. So were most following products. Perhaps people are overestimating the AI technology, because they cannot know what comes next. They might be giving in to false promises. People are so entranced by the figure of AI that they are ignoring the ground it’s standing on.

Change agents are trying to sell products with stories that impress, insinuating that one needs to adapt to the pace, or they will be left behind. In contrary to this theory, many people value old-fashioned products and settings. Like the atmosphere of an old wood-panelled libraries, which are now being built by AI firms to give their users a “feeling of learning”.

Most library technology is falling behind the general technological evolution. Libraries are now dependent on corporate resources, e.g. the UK government recently issued a statement in which it intends to create a national data library – using libraries as data. Paul Gooding stressed the importance of understanding of what libraries can offer as institutions. He believes in sovereignty and control through responsible AI use. National libraries need to think about what role they are going to take – just watching or leading. He sees it as their job to be centring the community needs, which the globalized AI world will not respect.

An audience question concerned whether it is appropriate to compare AI abilities with human intelligence when defining AI. He responded that while it is easiest to compare it with how human minds works, people should not confuse AI’s actions with human intelligence.

Frank Scholze thanked Paul Gooding for his keynote and looked forward to hearing about how AI is used in the present members’ libraries after the break.

10. AI in Action: Voices from National Libraries

Estonia: Martin Öövel: Ensuring Linguistic and Cultural Diversity: AI – Ally or Enemy?

Martin Öövel started by telling the audience about a problem which came up when the National Library of Estonia was working with AI. They wanted to include cultural diversity ranging from humans to the internet to Large Language Models (LLMs). It is a trade-off between speed and transparency.

The traditional roles of libraries are being challenged by AI. He views it as their job to connect people with knowledge, especially with smaller cultures which are being ignored by the larger internet.

Momentarily, AI is mainly being trained with English and Chinese. Smaller, and especially poorer, countries and languages are being overlooked. Their viewpoints are not being taken in and the resulting machines will be limited to specific audiences. It is not just about language, but culture, fairness and knowledge quality. Libraries need to advocate those ideals, curate diverse content and influence its policymakers.

Culturally aware AI is essential for libraries. The idea that AI will support more languages in time is wrong, the strong languages simply become more widely used, while the small languages tend to be suppressed. Libraries cannot just rely on market solutions; they need to drive what is important to them. As an example, the National Library of Estonia wanted to implement its own automated cataloguing system and encountered the problem that what worked in English did not work in other languages. He finished by declaring AI neither ally nor enemy, but simply a tool for accessing knowledge and provide answers.

France: Gilles Pécout: AI in Libraries: An Ethical Approach

Gilles Pécout started by voicing that the involvement of national libraries in the AI discourse is important, but people need to ask about its legitimacy and formulate according guidelines, which also address ethical implications in an international context. In the French public sphere, AI has concerned libraries during the last years. There was an absence of AI regulations for academics and librarians, but those people need to be meaningfully included.

In 2021 the National Library of France (BnF) adopted a roadmap on AI and its implications for the institution. Subjects were the practical and professional application of AI as well as the social one - they need to consider that staff might be afraid to lose their jobs to AI. The BnF served as a trusted third party and extends its roadmap to outside collaborative partners. He thanked his colleagues in attendance who integrate ethical AI in all support initiatives and the francophone digital network.

Copyright data can only be allowed to be accessed when there are clear laws and rules protecting the authors rights. At a national, and at a European scale, those need to be formulated. Access needs to be democratized and open to diverse audiences, especially regional and local European languages. A European AI statement should follow recommendations given by UNSECO about the responsibility of libraries. The true ethics of AI need to be formulated and to reorganize AI as a global common good.

Netherlands: Wilma van Wezenbeek: Responsible AI in the National Library's Strategy

Wilma van Wezenbeek started by explaining her background in publishing and working for university libraries. All along her career, she was asked to be open and to share knowledge, as libraries are public institutions. Along with open access, that idea needed to be balanced with financing. The same goes for AI. The KB National Library's AI mission from 2020 includes public values, ethical principles and the environmental impact to consider, as training AI causes huge carbon emissions. They collaborate with the government and tech partners. Currently, they are creating a balanced AI Roadmap, which is to be published this year.

Norway: Trond Myklebust: The National Library of Norway as a Provider of Large Language Models

Trond Myklebust talked about their current AI projects. He stated that libraries will change due to AI, but that they can also influence and change AI itself as AI's content is generated from the internet. Large Language Models reflect whole societies and their culture, not just the language. His national

library was in a favourable position, as almost all Norwegian literature is by now digitised. The web is continuously harvested. Asked by the Norwegian government, the National Library of Norway created a content platform for Norwegian and Sami languages and made it available for the public. Of course copyright needs to be respected and it is applicable to most materials in their collection.

In another project they trained 17 different LLMs with different parts of the collection. It was crucial to include newsletters and nonfiction books, as they offer diverse vocabulary. Recently they asked the Norwegian government to negotiate with right holders by setting common principles. With this a new licensing scheme for LLMs would be possible. Now they await funding from their parliament.

Armenia: Anna Chulyan: NLA Partnership with Private Entities to Leverage AI Technologies Services and Research Processes

Anna Chulyan began by thanking the present CENL members for congratulating her on her library's 130th anniversary last year. The National Library of Armenia has worked with the private sector in AI collaboration. The Armenian language has many typographic particularities, therefore OCR system recognition and its integration into cyberspace is difficult.

"Portmind" is an AI powered company delivering a solution for the Armenian language. It took eight months to check their work and they have an agreement to check 12 million documents in total. The OCR is not developed for profit, for the public to use freely. It is available at GitHub. When the Armenian government decided to end the collaboration, it became problematic for the library, as they hadn't saved the data themselves. They found a solution in "Portmind" making the code available to the library.

Another challenge was to evaluate the quality of the digitised papers. They collaborated with CALFA and involved creative technology centres which work with young people. They trained a model to extract the text from the scanned documents. The participants were quite engaged in preserving cultural heritage and the library signed a memorandum with them. There are many benefits for the library from this collaboration. She believed that while libraries need AI companies, the companies need libraries and especially their data as well.

Belgium: Hannes Lowagie: AI-integration in Legal Deposit workflows

Hannes Lowagie (Royal Library of Belgium) talked via Zoom about using AI to modernise the "catalography", i.e. a combination of cataloguing and bibliography, workflows. AI can assist human cataloguers on three different levels. Firstly, by metadata recognition for fast registration with a document processing model. Secondly, by improving that metadata following RDA cataloguing rules with integrated GPT prompts. Thirdly, using those GPT prompts for automatic classifications for better discoverability.

Main benefits achieved with AI tools were consistency, scalable infrastructure, global alignment and collaboration for shared models. He called for everyone to connect and share their data. In the end he presented his publication "AI-Powered Cataloguing" which aids in building cataloguing applications with Microsoft Power Apps.

Lithuania: Renata Sadunišvili: User Experience and Personalization: LIBIS

Renata Sadunišvili presented a personalised book recommendation system for public library users via Zoom. The National Library of Lithuania collaborated with the Lithuanian state data agency to develop it. The goal was to enrich their LIBIS catalogue with the gathered data. They wanted to show book covers and visualisation in their catalogue to compete with the websites of private business like booksellers. They already used AI to synchronise book titles and author names and to group

works in different languages. This procedure can create top ten lists and charts for specific age groups and regions. Individual recommendations are possible as well. As a national library, they have huge data resources and want to use LIBIS and AI to give users a personalised experience and find books that will suit their taste.

Luxembourg: Carlo Blum: Autocat: Your AI Cataloguing-Assistant

Carlo Blum started by drawing attention to the problem of the fast-growing of the digital legal deposit. National Libraries usually do not get additional resources to catalogue those digital materials. In Luxembourg there is a backlog of over 70 000 files. The National Library of Luxembourg recently published its strategy on AI. He then presented an example of cataloguing with AI. The programme did quite well with only one error due to colour recognition.

The general approach is to identify images and text separately and then post process it into Marc21-XML. Afterwards, the results get evaluated with specific criteria. Overall the results are quite good for the title and author fields. Current challenges are some missing elements like indexing, as neither the DDC, nor internal classification is yet integrated. They aim to expand training data and optimise their cataloguing speed. In the end he recommended for libraries to collaborate and pool their data for shared use and development, as the vast amounts of data are not transparent or easily accessible.

Türkiye: Taner Beyoğlu: Leading Role of the NLT in the Age of AI / AI-Based Smart Library Project

Taner Beyoğlu first explained the general tasks of the National Library of Türkiye, like the unusual task to organise the network of Turkish public libraries as well. They have hugely expanded their national digital library during the last decade and made it available to the public with access stations all over the country, situated in public libraries. Currently, an important project is the smart library project. This, for example, includes a robot with an incorporated AI library assistant which can reply to the users audibly and answer questions about the library resources and services. Even personalised recommendations are possible by scanning the individual library card. The library wants to create a blueprint concept to share with other libraries in the country.

Bulgaria: Kalina Ivanova: Collaborative AI - NLB and INSAIT

Kalina Ivanova (National Library of Bulgaria) welcomed her presentation partner Emiliyan Pavlov from INSAIT (Institute for Computer science, AI and Technology) via Zoom.

Emiliyan Pavlov introduced himself as a data scientist and presented the research fields of INSAIT, which are quantum computing, trustworthy and generative AI and computer vision. INSAIT released a Bulgarian BgGPT which is a LLM for the Bulgarian language and is available and widely used by the Bulgarian public.

As cataloguing is very language specific, they wanted to use generative AI powered cataloguing and re-cataloguing. A human cataloguer is to review the generated content. The metadata can be used for semantic search. The retrieved results can then be used to augment the catalogue and generate more relevant content. This way the catalogue can create individual book recommendations based on a user's search history. There are other enhanced semantic search benefits like thematic discovery and educational filtering for teachers.

Serbia: Tamara Butigan Vučaj: LibrAlfy: Unlocking Serbian Written Heritage with AI

Tamara Butigan presented the very first AI project of the National Library of Serbia. As part of a GovTech Programme in Serbia, the national library was to encourage the public sector to accelerate

digital transformation. Serbia's literary wealth dates back to the 12th century and 90 percent of digitised material is image based, thereby lacking text search ability. Often Cyrillic and Latin are mixed together, which current OCR software cannot process well. LibrAlfy is a tailored OCR for Serbian Written Heritage. They unlocked AI modules for image enhancement, document layout analysis, optical character recognition, post-OCR correction and finally system performance monitoring for its workflow.

11. Closing remarks

Frank Scholze thanked all the presenters and the audience for staying focused. He wished for everyone to reflect on today's impressions and closed the first day.

DAY 2 – TUESDAY, 18 June

Frank Scholze welcomed everyone for the second day of the conference. He used the moment to congratulate Örn Hrafnkelsson on the National Day of Iceland, and Liz Jolly from the British Library on being appointed Director of the University Library of Cork.

12. AI Unleashed: Shaping the Future of (National) Libraries

Report of the AI in Libraries Network Group: Jean-Philippe Moreux

The group chair Jean-Philippe Moreux said the network group's goal was to better understand AI, collaborate and think about the impact of AI in society as a whole. During the last year they organised a workshop, a conference, webinars and did an AI survey again. There is growing concern among members about scraping of web content by private actors.

They created a draft for an AI Ethical Practices Plan and a likewise charter will be submitted to CENL in October 2025. They will cooperate with the LIBER AI Task Force, the AI4GLAM network and all network members want to renew the network group for another three years this fall.

Potential for International Cooperation in GLAM Institutions: Ines Vodopivec (AI4GLAM)

AI4GLAM Secretary Ines Vodopivec said that AI is the future and libraries have to keep up. Workflows will change and while users are already using it, institutions still need to adapt. AI4GLAM aims to do this as a globally driven community. AI4GLAM was founded in 2018 with six institutions, now they have several working groups and regional chapters. Members are university staff, IT representatives, leaders, librarians, researchers, data scientists and developers.

Main areas of work are the development and advancement of AI tools for enhanced efficiency and advocating for change in a positive and accurate way. AI4GLAM will attend the Fantastic Futures Conference in December at the British Library. They try to improve the AI workflows with the data that libraries have available. It is not clear who is in charge of that data between data storage, AI factories, external systems and end users – these actors have to work well together. AI4GLAM looks at the AI developed on the market, then adopt and test it, and use it in internal and external workflows.

She recommended the strategy for AI use developed by the Library of Congress, which includes several principles that can be used by cultural institutions. She believes that humans are still at the beginning of this development and while they learned a lot during the last years, much is still to come and global collaboration is the best tool to achieve this.

Belgium: Tan Lu: Recognizing Front Pages of Digitized Newspapers

Via Zoom Tan Lu presented a project of the Royal Library of Belgium that concerned digitised newspapers, it involved major press, mostly daily newspapers like the “BelgicaPress”. Over 4 million pages were processed with OCR and published online. Unlimited access for scientific research and teaching purposes is now available. The team wants to create an AI model which can determine the front pages of any newspaper. The major challenge are the visual similarities of different titles. They cannot rely on OCR output due to these similarities.

Comparing mistakes made by humans and the AI, the latter performed much better. This was motivating and his team started full-scale training. The team is happy with its current performance. Now they want to operate the AI with increased transparency by attributing the decision-making of the model backwards and analyse the data. They use visualisation of the results with UMAP (Uniform Manifold Approximation and Projection for Dimension Reduction). It shows which parts of the pages are most used by the AI during the decision-making process. It turned out to be mostly the titles and photos of the pages. Using these results, the team can programme the AI model accordingly.

Finland: Mona Lehtinen: AI at the National Library of Finland

Mona Lehtinen works with automated subject indexing and AI related content. The National Library of Finland has developed open source tools like “Annif” (a well-known tool for automated subject indexing). “Finto AI”, a service for automated subject indexing based on artificial intelligence, was launched in 2020. They work with many partners in other libraries, institutions and private businesses.

The National Library of Finland is also extracting bibliographic metadata through its system by implementing LLMs in cooperation with the National Library of Norway. They participated in a LLM competition, which “Annif” won. They will participate in the CITF (Copyright Infrastructure Task Force), which was founded by Estonia. AI Guidelines for the national library are currently being finalised. They are also starting new projects and joining EU programmes for advancing AI use. Various teams at her library are looking into how to work with AI. She looked forward to new collaboration opportunities in the future.

Slovenia: Jana Kolar: Reviving the past with AI

Jana Kolar explained how the National and University Library of Slovenia used AI for cultural heritage preservation. They created an online exhibition with a digital assistant trained on historical newspapers and photos concerning the 1895 Ljubljana earthquake. She then proceeded to show the video, which was an artistic visualisation of the project.

The project was covered in newspaper all over the country and got a lot of attention. As the personal storytelling part was important to them, they had library staff volunteering to participate creatively in the project.

12.2 Discussion in break-out groups

The attendees were presented with several possible topics for break out groups (AI from the scratch – opportunities and limits; Smart Collections: AI for discovery, Metadata & Search; Beyond Automation: AI & the Human Experience; Trust the Machine? Ethics, Bias & AI Governance; AI at any cost? - Sustainable AI; Future Visions: AI, Innovation & the Next-Gen Library). Each EC member headed a group and all participants went to discuss.

12.3 Results from break-out groups

Tomasz Foltyn reported that they had interesting discussions about all five proposed topics. They agreed it was important not to wait for AI resources to come from the outside, but to develop the tools they need as national libraries themselves. The mind-set of librarians needs to change. AI is not any new tool. They have to spend serious money on it and dedicate parts of their budget for AI, as it is very expensive. They need AI training for themselves and their staff, especially to cover the generational gap in IT know-how. It is important to realise it is still people working with AI and not AI working by itself. Libraries should be on top of informational and technological changes. He found the discussion to be very inspiring and was thankful for the opportunity.

Gilles Pécout reported that his group talked about AI in the European context and on the European level. They found the question essential, on which level to cooperate - European, global or just national? European sovereignty is important and needs to be protected, this also applies to data security. Which level of Europe needs to be included in this and to which extent? The EU or the Council of Europe or the whole European geographical community, including border countries? The group decided that they needed all levels of cooperation to achieve their goals, and those goals need a lobby, perhaps national libraries themselves.

Karin Grönvall's group also spoke about political issues and especially copyright issues. How to go forward with AI while respecting the copyright laws applicable to our collections, especially legal deposit. They talked about the limitations of AI and how and when to use it in research. There were suggestions to change the laws and develop shared data spaces. They wondered which national library would be the first to get taken before court, once they have to test the limits of the regulations concerning legal deposit.

Audrey Whitty presented her group's outcomes, titled "democracy in action". They talked whether AI can improve user experience. It certainly can, but libraries need to work together with the users and as national libraries, especially concerning LLM's for smaller nations. The group found it vital to focus more on our added values, like while AI can make work more efficient, it has to be checked afterwards. They also wondered whether there needs to be a human final editor. Management needs to change with AI, mistakes made by AI have to be accepted, as they have to be with humans, as also AI is not perfect. Ethical aspects always need to be considered. Should national libraries take a teaching role in AI, like they did with the internet in the 2000s? The group was not sure about that, they believed their role is to inform the public about misinformation and critique AI.

Ivanka Stričević said her group had a great geographical range, which benefited their discussion. She then gave over to Timothy Janz, from the Vatican Library, to present their results. He talked about the wide-ranging discussion and about a certain frustration. They thought that they always seem to be catching up with new developments, which renders old projects immediately out of date.

The libraries' interests do not align with the interest of the big tech companies. It is important to keep our own objectives in mind, like preserving small languages. Libraries are trying to improve the workflows, and are trying to improve the user experience. The group thought the most important thing is to collaborate and to work together. National libraries are smaller than the big tech companies, but their resources are huge – their data gives them negotiating power. The interests with the copyright holders align with the interest of national libraries in the case of copyrights. They recommended that CENL should develop a policy statement concerning AI. They also talked about Transkribus as a good example for what can come out of a collaboration of national libraries.

Frank Scholze concluded by stating that CENL should think about doing more cooperative projects together. It is important to remember that the decisions made now have a lasting impact. He thanked everyone for the feedback.

13. Burning the Books, then and now: from Clay tablets to the world of AI

Richard Ovenden, OBE MA FRSA FSA FRHistS FRs

Frank Scholze welcomed Richard Ovenden, the senior executive officer of the Bodleian Libraries, who thanked him for the opportunity to talk to the CENL members. He told the audience that he spent ten years working for the National Library of Scotland and wished them a happy anniversary. He has published a book ("Burning the Books" in 2020) that addresses attacks on knowledge throughout history and he wanted to bring these thoughts to us, ending with the current threat of AI.

First, he provided examples of how libraries had been threatened and destroyed from the time of the Library of Alexandria until the early 20th century, including the Nazi regime's burning of books and other resources.

Nowadays, libraries are still being destroyed during war. The Taliban destroyed libraries in Afghanistan to limit information access, especially for women and children. The same thing is happening in Ukraine, Gaza and, to a lesser extent, with books being banned in the USA. The big tech companies are indulging political powers through social media and knowledge platforms. The Trump administration in the USA continuously targets universities, archives and libraries, which in turn see their institutional freedom being threatened.

Government policies can limit information platforms dramatically. The lack of records in the digital realm is a great concern for archivists, like when webpages or social media platforms are being removed by governments. The "Data Rescue Project" fights against this removal of records. Activist archivists rescue data and give it to libraries and archives. Also, libraries are relying increasingly on commercial cloud service providers.

The Bodleian Library in Oxford partnered with OpenAI to advance research and innovation. It's a pilot research project aiming at the digitisation and structuring of their card catalogue. They also wanted to digitise global dissertations and tested OpenAI tools on existing datasets. AI is pervasive at the Bodleian, so they have no illusion about its future dominance. The question is how will they engage with the industry; do they build their own tools or collaborate with the private tech industry?

The theory of LOCKSS (lots of copies keep stuff safe) is true for analogue and digital media. AI companies are hitting the data frontier. Millions of books are being pirated to train AI. University websites are very desirable for AI bots. The reason is that its diverse vocabulary is very useful to AI. Academic institutions need to ask themselves whether they want to assist AI by providing this information, or to support their scholars by protecting their intellectual property.

He closed his talk by suggesting a new approach. As a society, he said, we consider food and energy security. Now, we should also consider knowledge security. Knowledge needs to be expansive and a service to society. In particular, unique materials need to be protected; things that are not available online, that AI cannot access. We still have the impulse to preserve knowledge and it is still at the heart of what we all do.

Frank Scholze thanked him and proceeded to ask him whether the Bodleian Library offers unique material to AI - they do not. He said that OpenAI is motivated to collaborate with academic libraries, because they want to use their "works" legally. The Chair also asked what he would expect from a

collaboration between library institutions and the tech industry. Richard Ovenden thinks that libraries need to be aware of the dependencies that exist and take responsibility for their data.

14. Update on the situation in Ukraine

Lyubov A. Dubrovina, the Director General of the Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine (VNLU), spoke to the CENL members through a pre-recorded video.

The VNLU continues to fulfil its mission as one of the country's national libraries despite the ongoing war, managing collections and safeguarding national memory. They focus on developing approaches to creating digital information resources and integrating the Library's information assets into a unified system.

VNLU expands their online digital library services through platforms like ResearchUA and LibNAS UA, while creating and updating electronic library and information resources. They have implemented a secure storage system for critical digital data with automated backup protocols to ensure long-term preservation and continuous online access. Her team is contributing to the Horizon Europe Policy Support Facility project "PSF Country".

The library prepares scholarly editions based on research into manuscript and rare book collections, highlighting Ukrainian heritage and its contribution to global history. Comprehensive digitisation efforts, including thematic digital collections, are actively being implemented to preserve and provide access to Ukraine's documentary heritage. Specialists developed a dedicated resource aimed at helping individuals cope with war-related stress and trauma. They prepared information to counter hostile information and psychological operations in Ukraine's information space and supported strategic communications.

At the same time, the National Law Library focused on addressing the challenges of providing legal information services under wartime conditions. They devoted significant attention to the development of international cooperation and partnerships. One of the most significant scholarly and communication events held by the VNLU in 2024 was the international scientific conference "Library. Science. Communication. Integration into the International Library Space" hosted by VNLU with participants from 13 countries.

Despite the immense challenges, VNLU supports volunteer activities and provides assistance for Ukrainian soldiers. The library continues to suffer from the effects of nearby missile interceptions, drone and Shahed strikes, as well as from a critical lack of funding. Lyubov A. Dubrovina expressed her deep gratitude to colleagues and partners for their tremendous and unwavering support.

Frank Scholze thanked her and asked everyone to keep supporting the Ukrainian colleagues and staying connected with them during these difficult times.

15. Presentation by the 2026 host Claude Conter, National Library of Luxembourg

Claude Conter, the Director of the National Library of Luxembourg who will host the AGM next year, invited the CENL members to his library. His presentation started with a video, which showed the city of Luxembourg and its national library.

Claude Conter said that he and his team are very excited to welcome CENL members next year and for everyone to experience the city of Luxembourg. He went on to present some fun facts about Luxembourg, because he wanted everyone to get to know the “real” Luxembourg.

There are many ways to get to Luxembourg whether by plane, train, car, or even on foot. Public transport is completely free in the city, which will make getting around easy. He spoke about the Luxembourgish idea of having a mixed culture. There is no national Luxembourgish culture, but a European one, developed from connecting with each other. He plans on showing the members this “motto” next year, which is fitting for CENL as well – connecting and crossing borders on a European level.

16. Closing remarks, Farewell

Frank Scholze thanked the colleagues from Luxembourg for their invitation, which gives everyone something to look forward to next year. He then reflected on the past two days of the meeting and expressed his gratitude to Amina Shah and the National Library of Scotland team for hosting the event and creating such a warm and welcoming atmosphere.

He thanked all participants for their presence, contributions, and active engagement in the discussions, as well as the external speakers for bringing valuable new perspectives to CENL. He wished those joining the tours of the National Library of Scotland an enjoyable experience and bid farewell to the others.

Recalling his remarks at the reception in Edinburgh Castle on Sunday, he closed the meeting at 14:00 GMT with the words “let’s stay and work together to build the bridge, while we’re walking over it.”