IN FOCUS

UNOG LIBRARY: REINTERPRETING ITS HISTORIC ROLE IN TODAY’S ENVIRONMENT

“We must preserve the knowledge of the past, gather in the information of the present, and help develop wisdom for the future. The Library has an important catalytic role to play in the new, networked environment.”

James H. Billington, Librarian of Congress, Washington, D.C.

The UNOG Library traces its lineage to the League of Nations Library founded in 1919 and endowed by John D. Rockefeller Jr. in 1927, to become “a centre of international research and an instrument of international understanding”.

UNOG staff members, diplomats from the permanent missions, conference delegates, civil society representatives and accredited journalists as well as external researchers are the main clients of the Library. In 2011, the Library received 63,500 of its clients in person, answered approximately 40,000 reference questions and loaned more than 15,000 documents, books and journals. Even as the Library maintains its strong traditional library and archive services, it focused in 2011 on reinterpreting its historic role in today’s environment. This required mobile and flexible client services and resource efficiencies when acquiring and sharing advanced knowledge and information management expertise.

UNOG LIBRARY DATABASE SUBSCRIPTION AND USAGE, 2006–2011

Visitors to the UNOG Leaders on the Path to Peace exhibition: portrait of James Eric Drummond, First Secretary-General of the League of Nations (UN Photo/Fabrice Arlot)
ACCELERATING THE SHIFT TO ELECTRONIC RESOURCES

Continuing to increase the application of technology to its resources, the Library extended its electronic offerings and developed new research tools facilitating online information retrieval.

Subscriptions to electronic databases increased from 57 in 2010 to 60 in 2011, raising the online offerings of the Library to 66,823 journals and e-books. More technological improvements came with new tools to enable users to find specific full-text documents quickly within the vast electronic collections. With a new A-to-Z list of electronic journals, these tools went live at the UNOG Library in February 2011 and have proved to be user-friendly and reliable.

The success of the Library’s online improvements is reflected in a surge in the use of electronic resources across the board. Most notably, the number of searches of online databases has almost tripled in four years, while the number of database subscriptions has steadily increased:

DIGITIZATION FOR ACCESS AND PRESERVATION: LONG-TERM STEWARDSHIP OF UNITED NATIONS INSTITUTIONAL MEMORY

Throughout 2011, description and digitization efforts were stepped up with the intention of expanding global access to an increasing number of United Nations official records, League of Nations and UNOG historical archives.

Working in collaboration with the Dag Hammarskjöld Library at Headquarters, over 180,000 pages of General Assembly documents were digitized in Arabic, Chinese and Russian and made available through the Official Document System. Four thousand documents were indexed providing metadata for effective online searching.

To improve access to League of Nations archives, some 11,000 new units of description were created and made available online through the archives catalogue. Paper preservation focused in 2011 on the League of Nations map collection, which contains over 20,000 individual maps, including those submitted in support of international treaties filed with the League of Nations. A broad description of the entire collection was produced as the first step towards a complete preservation project.

A large-scale project started at the end of 2011 for League of Nations official records. The project will see the digitization of approximately one million pages of League of Nations Council, General Assembly, and Secretariat documents by an external company. A second, smaller project to provide online access to prestigious UNOG archives was initiated for the collection of working papers and other archival documents on the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Documents have been reviewed and scanning has been initiated, resulting in the digitization of 1,500 pages so far.
To address the preservation of electronic records, a critical component of current and future institutional memory, the Library’s Registry, Records and Archives Unit joined a pilot for UNITE-docs. This record management platform is being developed by the Office of Information and Communications Technology and evaluation of the UNOG pilot will take place during 2012. Record managers also continue to review files, apply pre-approved retention schedules and develop classification plans, preparing UNOG services for the implementation of the system.

**TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT OF INFORMATION LITERACY**

The Library reached out to its current clients and potential users through various activities supporting and fostering knowledge-sharing.

The Personal Knowledge Programme is a vehicle for training people in the use of Library resources and the management of current records. Since its implementation in 2007, the Programme has registered a significant increase in the number of clients each year. In 2011, 99 new clients benefited from coaching sessions on 156 different modules.

Giving staff members and delegates new to Geneva a head start in information management and research, the Library participated in new outreach activities in partnership with other UNOG services. At the introductory pilot programme for new delegates, launched by UNOG, the Library presented its services to the diplomatic community, including information on the management of the UNOG website and the organization of cultural activities. When presenting the Library at the induction programme for new staff members organized by the Staff Development and Learning Section, library staff focused on information retrieval and record-keeping.

As a special outreach activity open to all persons interested in the Library’s activities and in visiting the League of Nations Museum, guided tours continue to be popular with external visitor groups. Through this service 879 persons visited the Library and Museum in 2011.

**STRENGTHENING THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM: EFFICIENCY THROUGH COLLABORATION IN THE SPIRIT OF ONE UN**

Committed to fostering collaboration and cooperation within the United Nations family, the Library aimed throughout 2011 at enhancing synergies and enabling even small libraries to do more with less.

To harmonize access to information resources and to realize economies of scale, six Geneva libraries (International Office for Migration, International Telecommunication Union, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, UNOG, UNOG Department of Conference Management/Languages Service) and the library of the United Nations Office at Vienna share the same integrated library management system following the UNOG Library’s technical and policy lead.

In the area of digitization, the Library facilitated new scanning projects with the United Nations Compensation Commission, the Joint Inspection Unit, the Department of Public Information’s Outreach Division and the International Bureau of Education of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. These activities in support of professional information management not only enabled the sharing of expertise, but also ensured a maximized use of specialized library equipment.

These support activities continued throughout 2011 and the UNOG Library is planning to expand its common services approach in the coming years. Other collaboration opportunities with Geneva libraries will be investigated and developed for further efficiency and resource coordination.
WIDENING INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION AND OUTREACH

The UNOG Library initiated dialogue with several libraries in the United States to open up its outreach activities and gain access to international networks of expertise. Especially fruitful were discussions with the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., on collaboration for digitization projects. The UNOG Library will be contributing content to the World Digital Library and profiting from the experiences gained in the National Digital Information Infrastructure and Preservation Program. An information exchange is being set up with staff of the Ralph J. Bunche Library of the United States Department of State. Exhibitions including selected pieces of the UNOG Library’s archival treasures will be presented at exhibits organized together with the Library of Penn State University at Harrisburg and similar projects are considered in coordination with the Kansas City Public Library.

Bringing together diplomats, academics, United Nations staff and representatives of international and local Geneva for knowledge-sharing, the UNOG “Library Talks” programme, successfully initiated in 2010, continued with the organization of seven events throughout the year which were attended by more than 300 participants (see the Highlights section for more).

For the temporary exhibition, *The Aaland Islands Solution: a precedent for successful international disputes settlement*, the Library worked with the Archives of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, the National Archives of Finland and the Aaland Islands Museum. This cooperation enabled the compiling and showing of key archival documents and contemporary images related to one of the greatest successes of the League of Nations and a precedent in international law for the peaceful settlement of disputes – the 1921 decision to demilitarize and neutralize the Aaland Islands.

MONTHLY BREAKDOWN PER USER CATEGORY 2011

![Graph showing monthly breakdown per user category for 2011](image-url)