



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.