7 years of newspaper retro-digitization at the Swiss National Library

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Introduction

- A young institution: founded in 1895, collection mandate: Helvetica since 1848
- Digitization goal: improve collection usability
- Digitization Department: 7 staff members (5 FTE), 15-20 simultaneous projects, partnerships
Possible mistakes in press digitization

And many, many, more...

- Lack of specification for presentation platform
- Unknown digitization companies
- Partnerships: contributions not sufficiently defined
- Budgeting mistakes
- Mistakes in calculating workload
- Mistakes on call for tender level
- Untrained staff
- Insufficient communication between project manager and team
- Lack of technical background (infrastructure, knowledge)
- Mistakes on contract level
- No/insufficient quality control
- Loss of data due to: data handling mistakes, loss during transport, inadequate storage infrastructure etc.
- Insufficient definition of digitization parameters
- Insufficient security for originals
- Insufficient digitization purpose
- Insufficiently clear contracts
- Duplicate digitization of the same collection
- Unknown rights' situation
- No/not sufficiently clear digitization strategy
- Insufficient background-check of unknown digitization companies
- Lack of specification for presentation platform

Lessons learned in 7 years of newspaper retro-digitization in Switzerland

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Lesson 1: Know your collection

- Preparation phase: from collection definition and preparation to rights clarification
- Mistake: Insufficiently detailed inventory ➔ Lack of information
- Result ➔ Incomplete information, wrong file- and issue-names and many more
- Result: Re-Scanning of the main part of the pages, manual corrections of the others ➔ huge workload, increased costs
Lessons learned – solutions found

- Collect detailed collection information (bibliographic, physical information; information about periodicity etc.)
- Solution: Define what information you need and create a model inventory
What’s solved – what’s still to do

- Problems solved:
  - Normally no re-digitization due to surprises concerning original collection
  - Less time-consuming manual and automatic corrections
- Page-per-page inventory would be better but is unrealistic due to lack of resources
Lesson 2: Strengthening the contract during the test phase

- Digitization phase: from procurement and transport to storage
- Mistake: Insufficiently precise digitization parameters
- Result ➔ misunderstandings between digitization company and NL

Result: Project runs late, post scan workload + quality control workload increased

Image Source: http://www.connexin.net/de/humor-witze/projekt-management/
Lessons learned – solutions found

- There is always room for interpretation ➔ Define the profile more precisely
- Solution 1: Define a test phase with clear criteria for acceptance
- Solution 2: Watch your schedule – always react when slippage occurs
From lessons learned to guidelines – to practical tools

Establishment of guidelines and standards:

- Standards of Newspaper digitization
- NL digitization guidelines
From lessons learned to guidelines — to practical tools

Making sure that guidelines are respected in daily work

- Documentation of all steps in detailed workflows
- Creating tools and working instruments
- Adapting / reworking workflows tools and instruments
From lessons learned to guidelines — to practical tools

How we share

- www.digicoord.ch
- www.nb.admin.ch
- Exchange of experience between memory institutions

Conclusion and perspectives

- Recognize and reflect on your mistakes
- Identify the causes
- Draw up reference documents
- Do test runs, check partial deliveries
- Accept that all this takes considerable time
- Accept that mistakes are unavoidable
- Only those who are not digitizing will not make any mistakes
- Better to have an imperfect collection online than none at all
Look at the result on

www.swisspressarchives.ch
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THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION

Questions?