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**The University of Liège Libraries (Belgium)
by Francois Renaville**

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The University of Liège (ULg) was founded in 1817, when the Belgian territory was still part of the Netherlands. At its foundation, the City of Liège donated about 7,000 volumes to the young university library. A bit later, the Averbode Abbey gave about 8,000 books and 150 precious manuscripts. The library collections grew and contained more than 60,000 volumes and 400 manuscripts in 1842. In the 1950s, the University began to move to a new campus (10 km away from the city center where the library is located). To ensure that researchers could easily have access to the documentation they needed, the University decided to create more than 25 decentralized department libraries, located both in the city center and on the new campus. In 1965, a huge building was built on the new campus to act as a remote storage for the main library collections. Extended in 1995, its capacity is now 35 linear kilometers long.

In 2003, the University decided to modernize and completely reorganize its slowly antiquating libraries by ambitious mergers and by actively supporting several innovative projects (e-resources collections development, systems and IT, Open Access...). The ULg Libraries' structure was strongly simplified and reorganized in a more logical way: the ULg Libraries are now composed of 5 main libraries (a life science library, a science and technology library, an agronomy library, a law and social science library and an arts and humanities library), which are structured in 19 branches, according to the physical situation of the concerned faculties and departments. The University, which counts 19,500 students and 2,800 lecturers-researchers, has also invested a lot in renovating the libraries' facilities (new work spaces created, Wi-Fi everywhere...). In addition to mergers of branches, there will be two real-estate projects in the next few years: the arts and humanities library will get a brand-new communication node and a modern remote storage (with a scan-on-demand service, a reading room and appropriate conservation conditions for precious collections) will be erected instead of the current one on the main campus.

In addition to those infrastructure projects, the ULg Libraries have been involved in IT projects and have strongly developed their e-resources collections. In 2006, the catalog moved to Ex Libris Aleph ILS and the SFX link resolver was deployed. New step forward: Primo and Primo Central were launched in February 2013. The ULg Libraries have also recently launched a new website (Drupal) and a portal for 800,000 scanned catalog cards for book items which are not available via their discovery tool. Currently, the ULg Libraries collections contain about

2,000,000 books (more than 35% are directly available in reading rooms), 49,000 print serials titles (of which 6,000 are current subscriptions), 50,000 e-journals (subscriptions and free e-journals), 66,500 e-books and more than 132,000 geographical maps. Among special collections, let's mention 6,700 manuscripts, 600 incunabula, several tens of thousands of works from the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries and about 700 psychological tests. Several projects for digitization of special collections are in progress.

Beside collection development and infrastructure modernization initiatives, Open Access is probably what characterizes the ULg Libraries the best. The University and ULg Libraries have, for several years already, carried out an active policy in matters of support for Open Access to academic information and henceforth fully subscribe to the principles of the OA movement. The ULg Libraries have been developing multiple initiatives in matters of Open Access, whereby particular attention has been paid to the interoperability of these tools and to their being used in the best possible way. In 2005, the Open Access Portal for the Publication of Scientific Journals (PoPuPS, http://popups.ulg.ac.be) was launched. Its goal is to allow journals – existing or new – published by the University to be distributed in Open Access: a fifteenth academic journal will soon be available on PoPuPS. In 2006, the University decided to make it mandatory for all Ph. D students to place on an Open Access server an electronic version of all new doctoral and postdoctoral theses defended within the Institution; the ULg Libraries took up the challenge and launched BICTEL/e (http://bictel.ulg.ac.be). But BICTEL/e was only the first step to a more ambitious project: the ORBi institutional repository (http://orbi.ulg.ac.be). In 2007, the University's Administrative Board adopted the "Immediate-Deposit & Optional-Access" (IDOA) mandate and decided to make compulsory the introduction of references for all publications and academic conferences by ULg members, backdated to 2002, and the repository of the full electronic version of all journal articles published by ULg members, backdated to 2002. The reference has to be placed in ORBi as soon as the publication has been accepted by the publisher. Whenever publisher agreement conditions are fulfilled, the ULg author authorizes the access to the deposit as Open Access. The ULg Libraries launched ORBi (DSpace) in November 2008. Currently, ORBi already contains more than 91,600 references, of which about 55,800 have a full text (28,800 of them with an OA full text), and gets more than 1,400 downloads a day (spiders excluded). Currently, the ULg Libraries and the University of Luxemburg are collaborating to set up an institutional repository based on the model developed at Liège: ORBi[lu] (http://orbilu.uni.lu), whose official launch will be in the first half of 2013.

The ULg Libraries are strongly involved in collaborative projects with other Belgian university libraries (jointly managed preservation for serials, conservation plans, union catalog, digitization...) and are currently at the head of the Belgian French-speaking library consortium BICfB (http://www.bicfb.be).

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François Renaville has been working as a systems librarian at the

University of Liège Libraries since 2007. He works in particular on Aleph ILS, SFX link resolver and Primo discovery tool. Since June 2010 he has been a policy officer for the Belgian French-speaking library consortium BICfB and is currently the chairman of the association of the customers of Ex Libris France (*Association des Clients d'Ex Libris France*, ACEF). The library's website can be found at www.libnet.ulg.ac.be

http://www.informedlibrarian.com/featuredlibrary.cfm?FILE=flib1303.html

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