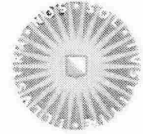


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Datum
10 juni 2011
Onderwerp
Rapport visitatiecommissie

Geachte Heer Brinkman,

Als voorzitter van de visitatiecommissie van de Koninklijke Bibliotheek bied ik U bij dezen graag ons definitieve rapport aan. Een reactie van de directie van de KB treft u hierbij eveneens aan.

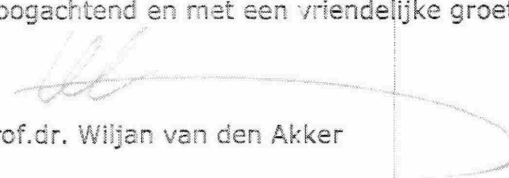
Ik maak van deze gelegenheid graag gebruik U te melden dat de commissie met plezier aan deze opdracht heeft gewerkt, de medewerking van alle betrokken partijen als uiterst betrokken en terzake kundig heeft ervaren en zonder enige noemenswaardige discussie tot een eensluidend oordeel is kunnen komen. Ook de voorbereiding en begeleiding van het werk van onze commissie waren in uiterst professionele handen.

Hoewel het rapport m.i. aan duidelijkheid niets te wensen overlaat, hoop ik dat onze drukke agenda's het nog toelaten U ook nog een mondelinge toelichting te kunnen geven. Onze secretaresses hebben daartoe inmiddels contact met elkaar opgenomen.

Aangezien ik momenteel in het buitenland verblijf, zal ik deze brief namens mij laten ondertekenen.

Mede namens mijn collega's Richard Boulderstone, Edwin van Huis en Frank van Eijkern,

Hoogachtend en met een vriendelijke groet,

4/0 
Prof. dr. Wiljan van den Akker

Evaluation Report

I. Introduction

The review of the Koninklijke Bibliotheek (KB), concerning the years 2005 - 2011, was carried out in the spring of 2011. The committee read several background-documents - such as the self-evaluation, strategic plans, annual reports etc. - and held a site visit during three days from Monday 18 April 2011 to Wednesday 20 April 2011. The self-evaluation document was satisfactory. The committee agrees that comparison of data with other libraries is difficult, but the committee expected the KB to set its own targets. This was the case, but only to a limited extent. As part of the site visit, the committee conducted interviews with partners, both internal and external stakeholders, including the Board of Governors, the Board of Directors, the Works Council, representatives from university libraries, public libraries, and the field of publishers. In addition, a guided tour through the KB building and a number of follow-up discussions were part of the programme (see the appendix for the full programme).

II. Overall Picture

The KB has an excellent and deserved (international) reputation in the areas of digital preservation, digitization and digital libraries. It is recognized as one of the leading libraries in Europe. The organization is sought after as a partner in European funded and other collaborative projects. This ability to coordinate and lead European-wide projects is an undoubted strength of the KB. Large European projects, like Europeana would not have been successful without the KB.

The new general director is highly respected, well-liked and received in the circles of the main customers and partners of the KB, libraries and publishers. He shows leadership in the discussions about the role of the KB, both on a national and an international level. A more open attitude towards cooperation has improved the relations with the other libraries in the Netherlands. This is important in regard to the new direction the KB is taking and the transition that comes with this change. The overall picture is that the KB is seen as a highly powerful but trusted partner.

The KB has entered an important phase: it is making a transition from an onsite, physical library to an online, digital library. This is a profound change for the KB, something that cannot and should not be underestimated. It challenges and will challenge many of the KB's core principles, beliefs and organization in the years to come. Fundamental questions that will be dealt with in more detail later in this report, are for example: "Who are your customers and partners? What are your business model(s)? What is your collection policy? How do you serve your customers and what role does the current physical facilities play?"

A new strategy addressing these questions is under construction, and is still debated within and outside the KB. The recommendations given by the committee in this report, should first of all be seen in the light of this important, if not vital, phase of change and transition the KB is facing. The general view of the committee is that the long-term strategy, as it was revealed to us in the talks and in the literature, is in essence the right one. This also means that in the shorter term a variety of aspects need attention, acceleration and/or improvement. Therefore, the committee wants to stress that many of its recommendations should not be seen as pointing at negative results of the KB's performance, but as aspects where the process of transition could and should be improved and accelerated.

The committee wants to make the general recommendation that the KB should continue its policy to coordinate and lead (European-wide) projects. It is important for the whole Dutch library community that the KB invests in the generation of knowledge that can be disseminated to other libraries. Especially in the digital domain this will remain a necessity the coming years, for instance in relation to a national digital infrastructure.

III. Previous External Review 1998 - 2005

The leading document for the committee was the KB's self-evaluation, in which also the recommendations from the previous evaluation, published in 2005, are addressed. Six years ago, the previous committee established that the main objectives for the period 1998 - 2001 had been largely achieved, but expressed its concern about the following issues: (1) mission statement and scope, (2) international e-Depot, (3) staff policy, (4) financial position, (5) risk management and finally (6) economic benefits. The current committee agrees with the conclusion in the self-evaluation that most of these issues were and are dealt with sufficiently and that the recommendations have been - sometimes partly but substantially - implemented.

One of them, however, needs to be taken into consideration again: (3) the staff policy has not been changed substantially in the years after 2005. The committee agrees with the remarks made in the self-report that staff turnover is still low and that age and skill profiles of the staff are a concern, especially in light of the rapidly changing (technological) environment in which the KB operates. The point of the financial position (4) is still relevant. See Chapter IV.

IV. Findings and Recommendations 2005 - 2011

First of all, the committee wants to stress the fact that, as stated earlier, the KB is in a transition from an onsite physical library to an online digital library; a profound change, challenging the heart of the KB's core business. A new strategy is being developed that should address and answer these questions, but some doubt, fear and uncertainty will remain until this strategy is formulated and fully disseminated both internally and externally.

The future strategy

The future strategy is 'work in progress'. The proposed model, in which the KB provides a wide range of services to public and university libraries, appears to be the right one, even if the risks are taken into consideration. This has led the KB to the conclusion that it should invest in the *digital* library by building a new e-Depot, and to develop on this digital platform a variety of services. This way, the KB can become the spider in the web for the delivery of digital content. From the discussion with the stakeholders, the committee got the impression that this new strategy was appealing to both the public libraries and the academic libraries, although the latter were more hesitant. It is important that the KB validates this new strategy before developing and implementing it. The KB should ensure that a demand for such services exists, and that the KB will be welcomed to fulfill its new role. Limited engagement is a severe risk, and so far there have been numerous incidents showing that university and public libraries are still somewhat uneasy with the new role the KB sees for itself. Therefore, the KB has the difficult task to convince libraries, public as well as academic, and other potential partners, of this strategy, not in the least to take away the actual, latent and potential fear that the power of the KB will become a threat instead of an opportunity. To do so, the KB should make it crystal-clear how it perceives its own role and, even more so, how it sees the role of its partners. Especially with respect to the services rendered to the end-user, the libraries see the KB as a threat as they fear their relevance may be

diminished when all books and related media can be delivered digitally directly to the consumer. The KB should therefore not only develop services but also discuss with the libraries how these new services can strengthen their position.

In the discussions the possibility was raised that the KB could limit itself to being solely a service provider for other libraries. The committee does not support this view, because it feels that this would harm the public image of the KB, as it would make the KB invisible for the public, which could inevitably lead to a decrease in public and political support.

Recommendations

- (1) The sooner the new strategic document is finished, the better, both for the people working within the KB and for the partners and stakeholders.
- (2) Validate the new strategy with external support and analysis. Ensure that demand for services exists, that the organization is able and prepared to fulfill the new tasks, and that political support will be forthcoming. Define and communicate the new strategy to all stakeholders (internally and externally) to obtain the necessary support and buy-in.
- (3) Engage international and national libraries in the new e-Depot project for feedback, collaboration and support.
- (4) Validate the IT-architecture by an independent partner. Develop or adapt a method for Information Management.

Organization, Culture and Staff Policy

The new organization structure is an improvement. The committee noted, however, that the strategic force is decentralized in the new organization. This means that the heads of the departments must make strategic plans with detailed choices, which reflect their translation of the central strategy for their own unit. This has not been done so far. We noted, as a consequence, confusion among staff members about the effects of the new strategy on their roles and jobs. In addition, the committee learned from the interviews that many decisions are being re-discussed over and over again. We feel that thorough discussions are vital but the sense of urgency to come to conclusions must prevail.

As reported in the self-evaluation and verified by a number of interviews, the culture at the KB is insufficiently result-oriented.

As described in the previous review (2005) and also in the self-evaluation document, staff skills, particularly in the ICT area, need to be further developed. The committee was disappointed by the progress made over the last five years. The KB has developed a plan to replace the e-Depot system, which is critical to the national library infrastructure in the Netherlands. The new e-depot is a challenge; it requires a broad staff with digital skills. Adequate staffing will be a continuous issue. The new strategy can only be sustained if the members of staff are well-trained in the different aspects of the digital workflow. Human resources management must step up to this challenge. The strategy so far has been to hire new staff and keep the old staff as well. Although understandable, the committee feels that this may not be enough. From the discussion with the Works Council the committee got the impression that its members had sufficient understanding for the need to focus on training in necessary ICT-skills.

Recommendations

- (5) Ensure a sense of urgency at all management-levels, not just with the team of directors, to make clear choices for the future. These choices must be communicated clearly and consistently throughout the organization.

- (6) Develop (with staff involvement) and implement a comprehensive plan to improve staff skills in relevant areas. The committee suggests to use staff skills audit, testing, certification and personal objectives to monitor fast progress.
- (7) Develop annual business plans at the corporate and directorate levels with SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-bound) objectives with milestones and owners; report quarterly on progress; establish key performance indicators to monitor the processes.

Collections

In the Collection plan 2010 - 2013 the first steps are visible towards the demarcation of the physical collection. The new method to develop a new system of value-determination in preservation is a good step. The risks are addressed properly. With respect to the digital collection, the boundaries are not so clear. Questions the committee would like to see addressed are: "Where is the end in collecting (moving) websites, blogs etc. Is there a selection-strategy for digital objects? What is the meaning of the formal assignment of the KB - to collect *all written information* from the Netherlands - regarding the future? How does this apply to the multimedia world, with multimedia websites, Twitter, Facebook, etc. Who will take the lead in this discussion, and what other organizations should sit in on these talks? What will be the role of the Ministry?" This lack of clarity is not unique for the KB, since every library, be it public or academic, big or small, is facing the same problems, questions, paradoxes and uncertainties. On the other hand, the KB is the 'role-model' for the national library world, which makes these matters even more urgent.

Recommendation

- (8) Formulate a strategic answer to urgent questions about the digital collection, and implement the new policy.

Marketing Strategy, Exhibitions and the Web Shop

Apart from the role of collecting and preserving books and publications, be it on paper or in digital form, the KB also offers services in its building for the general public. There are exhibitions - some temporary, others on a more permanent basis - that also attract people who are not visiting the KB for scholarly or specialized purposes.

However, a clear marketing strategy is lacking. The strategy of the KB is not clear enough when it comes to its policy towards the general public. It is not clear which people the KB intends to reach, and why the exhibitions and reading rooms are set up the way they are. Exhibitions at the KB are poorly attended and do not sufficiently inspire visitors. The marketing policy is not sufficiently validated by data. The committee holds the view that the KB does not really understand who is using its services today, and who would want to use them in the future, or how the services and products should be modeled to be attractive to the targeted groups. This is worrying, because the KB's new strategy is getting more and more customer oriented. Still, the word 'customer' has hardly been heard in the discussions with the KB staff. Is there enough knowledge about the wishes of the customer, and is the KB focused enough on the customer to make this transition? Development of marketing and the staff-skills that go along with this strategy is required to make this transition a success.

The committee is convinced, that a strong image and a positive relation with the general public is of cultural, societal and therefore also political importance. But this need not all be done in the building in The Hague. For instance, if the KB succeeds in strengthening the alliances with the public libraries, (mutual) projects can be set up that will serve a more general audience in one

particular area of the country. Looking at what other libraries in Europe have experienced, exhibitions should always be accompanied by digital services (look at the British Library in London for good practice). If the KB wants to continue its in-house exhibitions and wants to receive the culturally interested public in The Hague, it will have to revise its strategy fundamentally, both in terms of vision and of marketing. The current practice in the KB is not up to date to fulfill the needs and desires of a contemporary public.

Recommendations

- (9) Define the KB's audiences and develop a clear vision of the role the KB should play in terms of offering those audiences an interesting and exciting environment.
- (10) Develop a marketing strategy for the customers of the KB and make sure this is implemented.
- (11) Validate the marketing strategy by quantitative data.
- (12) Look for best practices elsewhere, inside and outside the Netherlands.
- (13) Regarding exhibitions: Include online and onsite components using interactivity and web 2.0 techniques.
- (14) Regarding exhibitions: Work together with organizations with a good track record in this field.

Finances

The coming years budgetary cuts are expected and choices need to be made. The KB is in the process of drawing up a strategic plan in which these choices are motivated. Sharper decisions are necessary than mentioned in the annual budget 2011, where cuts seem to be avoided.

Recommendation

- (15) Make sharp and well-motivated choices if budgetary cuts are necessary.
- (16) Embed the choices in a clear, long-term strategic plan.

Cooperation with the National Archive

At the moment the KB is discussing a strategic partnership with the National Archives. Issues on the table are sharing services in the back-office, in access and in operational management. The partnership should lead to higher quality and cost-reduction. At the moment there is limited cooperation in the back office. The Board of Governors also spoke of cooperation in the front office, especially in regard to hosting (joint) events for the general public. Others have spoken about digitization as a joint effort, but there is no clear strategic picture yet.

Recommendation

- (17) Define and communicate a clear strategy for a possible and future cooperation with the National Archives to all stakeholders, internally and externally.

V. Conclusion

From the documents and the interviews during the site visit, the committee concludes that the Koninklijke Bibliotheek is doing a good, and from an international point of view, even excellent job. It has an outstanding reputation, especially in the digital area. It could become the spider in a national web of connected libraries or library-services. It is a powerful and at the same time trusted partner.

Over the years under consideration, 2005 - 2011, the KB has made some major improvements. The committee, however, has to make an exception for staff mobility and the development of necessary staff skills, especially in ICT.

The KB is at the threshold of a new identity: from an onsite, physical library to an online, digital library. The committee gives full support to this change and has made some recommendations that will clarify and speed up the necessary steps in this transition process. The management of the KB is aware that they will have to rethink and reformulate some fundamental aspects of its mission, its organization, its communication and its marketing strategy. It should communicate this as soon as possible to all internal and external stakeholders. The committee is confident that the management will succeed in the coming years to strengthen the KB for the near future.

The Hague, 6 June 2011

Wiljan van den Akker (chair)
Richard Boulderstone
Frank van Eykern
Edwin van Huis

APPENDIX

SCHEDULE

Visit External Evaluation Committee

April 18, 19, 20, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, The Hague

All meetings take place in the Bestuurskamer (4th floor)

Monday April 18

14.00-14.30	Reception by Bas Savenije, director general KB
14.30-17.00	Informal preliminary meeting
17.00-18.00	Guided tour KB
18.00-22.00	Dinner

Tuesday April 19

9.30-10.30	Bas Savenije (director general KB) & Hans Jansen (deputy director general KB)
10.30-11.30	Marketing & Services Division: Irmgard Bomers (head marketing & services division), Lily Knibbeler (head collections department), Elco van Staveren (head online services department)
11.30-12.30	Operations Division: Matthijs van Otegem (head operations division), Tanja de Boer (head collection care department)
12.30-14.00	Lunch
14.00-15.00	Innovation & Development Division: Hans Jansen (head innovation & development division), Astrid Verheusen (manager digital library programme), Jeffrey van der Hoeven (project manager digital preservation)
15.00-16.00	Works Council: Victor-Jan Vos (chair) & Tineke Koster (member)
16.00-17.00	Public Libraries: Marian Pater (SIOB), Eddy Tulp (Saxion Library)

Wednesday April 20

9.30-11.30	Board of Directors: Elco Brinkman (chair), Herman Bruggink (member), Bert Jongsma (member)
11.30-12.30	University Libraries: Hans Geleijnse (former director university library Tilburg), Maria Heijne (director university library Delft, and chair of UKB), Marjolein Nieboer (director university library Groningen)
12.30-14.00	Lunch
14.00-15.00	Suppliers: Joep Verheggen (Elsevier), Theo Huibers (Thaesis)
15.00-17.00	Wrap-up: Conclusions, outline evaluation report, to do list

