The National Digital Library of Latvia “Letonica” (NDLL) is a project of the National Library of Latvia (NLL). It was created with an aim to accomplish the digitisation of the collections of the National Library of Latvia and other cultural heritage organisations and making them accessible on the Internet.

It has the following functions:
- Preservation and storage of cultural heritage in digital form to prevent precious content from being lost and ensure that future generations will be able to access the digital material;
- Digitisation of analogue collections and acquisition of digitally born materials for their wider use in the information society;
- Ensuring wide online accessibility of digital content, a precondition for maximising the benefits for citizens, researchers and companies;
- Adoption of international standards, protocols and data formats, fostering of research in the digital library field, development of a common digitisation methodology for all Latvian heritage institutions and dissemination of best practices;
- National and international co-operation, including serving as the national aggregator for Europeana and other international initiatives.

The main long-term goal of the project is to digitise and make as widely accessible as possible the entire Latvian cultural heritage and to support this with IT infrastructure and services and common standards and methodology.

History

The first foray into digitisation in Latvia was made in the mid-90s by the Academic Library of Latvia, which digitised the collection of the historian, chronicler of his time and draftsman Johann Christoph Brotze “Sammlung verschiedener Lieflandischer Monumente” in 10 volumes, containing thousands of drawings and descriptions and documents depicting the history, architecture, and daily life of Riga, Latvia and Estonia. The Archives of Latvian Folklore digitised The Cabinet of Folksongs (www.dainuskapis.lv/), which is included in the UNESCO “World memory” programme. The Institute of Mathematics and Computer Science of the University of Latvia digitised old bibles, dictionaries, grammar books and sermon books from collections of the National Library of Latvia and the Academic Library of Latvia and developed a Latvian language corpus based on these works. The National Library of Latvia started its digitisation efforts in 1999 with the collection of 19th century newspapers.

The idea of co-operation among heritage institutions in Latvia in their digitisation efforts was defined at the beginning of 2001. An informal working group was created with the aim of harmonising standards and developing pilot projects. The initiative was supported by the Ministry of Culture as an example of pan-Baltic co-operation. In 2002 the first Baltic workshop on digitisation was held with the participation of representatives from libraries, archives and museums from all three Baltic countries, as well as guest speakers from Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, the Czech Republic, Scotland and Great Britain, the Netherlands, and other countries. The Ministry of Culture established a standards committee for all three heritage sectors, based upon a library standards committee. The next step was the transformation of the Consortium of the library information network into a state agency Culture information system and the subsequent drafting of requirements for cooperation between archives, libraries and museums.

To foster digital co-operation a national target program was created by the State Culture
The idea of co-operation among heritage institutions in Latvia in their digitisation efforts was defined at the beginning of 2001. An informal working group was created with the aim of harmonising standards and developing pilot projects. Capital Foundation and was active from 2002 to 2005. In the framework of this program national and regional memory institutions alike could create cross-domain digital co-operation projects. A couple of dozen joint projects were developed, digitising textual, visual, audio, audiovisual and even 3D objects. Besides the collections themselves the biggest achievement of the program was the establishment of best-practices in digitisation, including the conclusion that there is still much work to do in the field of metadata and standards harmonisation. The success of the program convinced the Ministry of Culture that long-term support for digitisation was necessary. As a result, in 2005 the government of Latvia decided to provide support for the establishment of a National Digital Library. In 2006 the project “Latvian National Digital Library "Letonica" was launched under the management of NLL with the aim of laying a common foundation for all the digitisation efforts in Latvia. The first task of the project was to create a shared technical infrastructure for the management of digital objects. In 2007 the National Library of Latvia, Cultural Information Systems and Microsoft signed a three-way agreement on the development of an IT backbone for a digital library, and in 2009 the DOM system was launched into production.

Besides that much was done to create a standards and methodology base. International standards and best practice were adopted and the "Digitiser's handbook" was created for the...
benefit of anyone involved in digitisation. Two thematic pilot projects were created, adopting the best practice in digitisation of different types of materials collections dedicated to the phenomenon of Latvian National Song and Dance Festivals and to the noted Latvian composer and educator Jāzeps Vītols. The most prominent pilot project however was the new collection of periodicals, which supported full text search – in order to complete the project the existing OCR technologies had to be further developed to adapt to the specifics of Latvian Frankfurt script.

Collections

At present the Digital Library holds digitised collections of newspapers, pictures, maps, books, sheet-music and audio recordings.

Newspapers

- **Heritage 1.** The first attempt at newspaper digitisation. More than 100 historical titles were scanned and made available as PDF files. [http://www.lnb.lv/en/digital-library/newspapers](http://www.lnb.lv/en/digital-library/newspapers)
- **Periodica.lv.** Much more modern approach to newspaper digitisation. 350 000 pages were scanned, OCRed and segmented into articles. [http://data.lnb.lv/digitala_biblioteka/Laikrasti](http://data.lnb.lv/digitala_biblioteka/Laikrasti)

Graphic documents

- **Poster in Latvia: Second half of 19th century - 2008.** Ca. 2700 images of events, both of social and commercial nature. [http://data.lnb.lv/digitala_biblioteka/Plakati_Latvija/latviski.htm](http://data.lnb.lv/digitala_biblioteka/Plakati_Latvija/latviski.htm)
- **Latvian History of Civilization in Images. Part A: Portraits.** 3700 portraits (drawings, silhouette portraits, daguerreotypes and photographs) created prior to 1914 from the collections of the NLL and the State Archive of Latvia. [http://data.lnb.lv/digitala_biblioteka/Grafika/Index.htm](http://data.lnb.lv/digitala_biblioteka/Grafika/Index.htm)
- **Ex Libris and prints.** Ca. 2400 images created by many renowned Latvian artists. [http://data.lnb.lv/digitala_biblioteka/Grafika/Index.htm](http://data.lnb.lv/digitala_biblioteka/Grafika/Index.htm)
- **Postcards.** Ca. 2000 postcards portraits, picture cards, greeting cards [http://data.lnb.lv/digitala_biblioteka/atklatnes/Index.htm](http://data.lnb.lv/digitala_biblioteka/atklatnes/Index.htm)
- **Collection of Baltic Central Library.** 50 photographs of Riga. [http://data.lnb.lv/digitala_biblioteka/BCB/Pastkartes/kopa/Riga.htm](http://data.lnb.lv/digitala_biblioteka/BCB/Pastkartes/kopa/Riga.htm)
- **In Search of Lost Latvia.** The newest addition to NLL digital collections. Contains ca. 20 000 postcards, paintings and photographs of Latvian historical and modern landscape. [http://www.zudusilatvija.lv/](http://www.zudusilatvija.lv/)

Maps

- **Latvia in the 16th - 18th Century.** 130 maps of Latvia and its historical regions. [http://data.lnb.lv/nba05/kartes/frame_anglu.htm](http://data.lnb.lv/nba05/kartes/frame_anglu.htm)

Sound recordings and Scores

- **Scores of symphonic music by Latvian authors.** 7 digital transcripts of scores with orchestra voices of popular Latvian compositions, which are not published and are available only in a written form. [http://www.lnb.lv/en/digital-library/sound-recordings-and-scores](http://www.lnb.lv/en/digital-library/sound-recordings-and-scores)
- **Wax cylinders.** 5 records from wax cylinders stored at the Department of Rare Books and Manuscripts. [http://data.lnb.lv/digitala_biblioteka/Valces/main.htm](http://data.lnb.lv/digitala_biblioteka/Valces/main.htm)
Born digital resources

- Academia. Open access repository of scientific publications published both at NLL and partner institutions.
  http://academia.lndb.lv/xmlui/
- Web harvesting has been done since 2005; in the year 2012 300 sites with a .lv domain will be harvested and made accessible to the public.

Special collections

- Latvian Song and Dance Festivals. Latvia has a unique and strong tradition of Song and Dance Festivals organized every four years. These historical materials from the first Song Festival in 1864 until the Latgale Song Festival in 1940 can be explored in this digital collection. Developed in co-operation with the Center of Folk Art.
  http://dziesmusvetki.lndb.lv/
Jāzeps Vītols. This collection is devoted to the renowned Latvian composer, conductor and educator Jāzeps Vītols. Developed in cooperation with the Jāzeps Vītols Latvian Academy of Music, Centre of Early Music, Latvian Academic Library, Latvian State Archive of Film, Photo and Audiovisual documents http://vitols.lnb.lv/fez/index1.php

Ongoing and future projects

Currently the National Digital Library of Latvia is involved in many projects, including two projects funded by the European Regional Development Fund. The following outcomes are expected of these projects by the end of 2012:

- More digital content. 2.1 million newspaper pages and 1.4 million book pages will be digitised and made available through the new interface for displaying printed materials.
- Resource aggregator. A resource aggregator will be implemented, which will allow users to search simultaneously in all digital collections, databases and catalogues of NLL and its partners.
- IT infrastructure. More storage and processing capacity, procedures for lifelong digital preservation, centralised user management, better integration of the DOM system and other IT systems of the digital library.
- New user interfaces. Specialised user interfaces for displaying maps, displaying content on mobile devices, serving children and handicapped people.
- New data infrastructure. Development towards implementing principles of Linked Open Data, development of national identification services.

National co-operation

One of the strengths of the National Digital Library is its strong emphasis on co-operation and partnerships across many sectors.

- Library sector. NLL is the centre of the library sector of Latvia and as such is serving also as the methodological centre for digitisation efforts in the library sector. NDLL is involving library partners in its digitisation projects and assisting library partners with its technical knowledge and capabilities.
- Cultural heritage institutions. NDLL tries to involve also museums and archives in digitisation processes; however the level of co-opera-
ration is still rather weak. Cultural Information Services are the main driving force behind digitisation in these sectors, but there is not enough co-ordination of efforts and resources on the national level. However NDLL has partnered with many museums on separate projects, serving as project coordinator and technical and methodological backbone.

- **Publishers.** NLL has always had strong ties with the publishing industry and is trying to involve them also in the creation of a digital library. At this point NDLL is establishing agreements with publishers concerning lifelong storage of their digital manuscripts and co-operating in the creation of a modern Latvian language corpus.

- **Academic and scientific institutions.** NDLL has launched its version of open access repository and is advertising its services to the academic and scientific institutions interested in wider dissemination of their publications.

NDLL is also taking part in many academic projects in the field of social sciences, for example, national projects "National Identity", "National Research Centres" and "Academic Network".

### International co-operation

NDLL is also taking part in international projects, including:

- **Europeana.** NDLL is the national aggregator of digital content for Latvia. It also takes part in pan-European projects geared towards development of content for Europeana, for example, Europeana Local and Europeana Travel.

- **The European Library.** NLL as a member of the Conference of European National Librarians (CENL) is taking part in its project The European Library (TEL), which served as a prototype for Europeana. Currently TEL has been largely overshadowed by Europeana; however it remains a dynamic partner and one of the largest and most stable content providers for Europeana, acting as a content aggregator for all the European national libraries. The latest project developed by TEL in a tight co-operation with NLL is "Reading Europe", highlighting the most prominent literary gems from all over Europe.

- **World Digital Library.** The World Digital Library (WDL) is a project of UNESCO and the Library of Congress, which focuses on the treasures of world heritage instead of sheer quantity of content. NDLL provides the content included in both the world register and the Latvian national register of the programme "Memory of the World".

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8. Ibid.