



ANNUAL REPORT 2018- 2019

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Where time is treasured

Following a participatory project with staff and stakeholders in 2018 and 2019, the Royal Library of Belgium became KBR, with a new tagline - where time is treasured.

Under this new name and in a new house style the 230 employees and 33 researchers pursue the diverse tasks of the national library: collecting and making available Belgian publications and safeguarding the historical, scientific and literary memory of our country.

KBR has a federal government grant of 15 million euros for these assignments, supplemented by its own income and project-based financing in 2018 and 2019 which resulted in a budget of 17 and 19 million euros respectively.



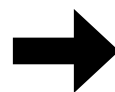
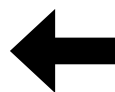


Development of a digital library

Libraries around the world are seeing shifts in the profile of their users. Fewer people found their way to the reading and study rooms on the Mont des Arts: from 56,000 readers in 2018 to 48,000 in 2019. The [reading rooms](#) for the consultation of heritage objects attracted a more constant audience of about 7,000 people per year.

During this same period, more people consulted the [KBR website](#): from 225,000 in 2018 to 260,000 in 2019. They used the [online catalogs](#) and consulted information about the collections, the cultural offerings and the library's service.

More and more of these online users also consulted the [remote collections](#): some 3.7 million pages of documents digitized from the KBR collections of which 750,000 pages from Belgian newspapers were browsed online by some 32,000 people.



Enrichment of the collections

The collection grew in 2018-2019 through the purchase and legal deposit of 73,000 books, 40,000 magazine issues and 8,000 digital publications. Institutions such as the Royal Academy for Overseas Sciences, the Royal Museum of Fine Arts Antwerp, the Public Library of Jette, the Library of the Federal Parliament, the Royal Mint and the Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons transferred parts of their collections to KBR in 2018, followed in 2019 by contributions from RIZIV, KU Leuven, DIVA Antwerp, FPS Finance, RMCA and Belspo. Professor Coppieters (VUB) also donated his collection of books on social sciences and history to KBR in 2019.



In addition to these structural additions, there KBR acquired of several hundred unique heritage objects. In 2018, this included letters from Charles Baudelaire expressing his known disdain for Belgium, early editions of Dionysius Carthusianus, Justus Lipsius and Jan Palfijn, Flemish coins from the 12th and 14th centuries and prints based upon the work of Pieter Bruegel. In 2019, KBR acquired an antiphonary from the printing house of the Westmalle Abbey, a photo album from the family of Paul Verlaine, a handwritten map of the diocese of Tournai, a medal from the Antwerp Jesuits and seven unique medieval coins.





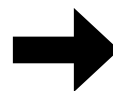
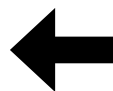
Conservation

KBR maintains documents keeping them in good condition both preventively and curatively. The restoration studio restored more than 1,350 heritage objects in 2018 and 2019, including the beautifully illuminated manuscripts from the Library of the Dukes of Burgundy and the well-known [*Rijmbijbel*](#) (Rhymed Bible) by Jacob van Maerlant.



External depository

The 150 kilometers of in the depositories in the building on the Mont des Arts are gradually filling up. Since 2018, KBR has stored less frequently consulted works in an external depository in Péronnes-lez-Binches (Hainaut). The relocation operation began in 2018 and 2019 and will continue for the near future.



Digitization

To increase the range of remote consultation services, KBR digitized about 18,431 bibliographic units and 895 hours of sound recordings in 2018. In 2019, 10,980 additional bibliographic units and 765 hours of music were recorded on 78 RPM discs. This represents a total of 585,714 images that were made available in 2018 and 694,534 in 2019. The extensive project was carried out independently, thanks to KBR's [DIGIT service](#), sometimes in collaboration with external partners such as BELSPO and its federal digitization program, the King Baudouin Foundation, and the Alamire Foundation of KU Leuven.

Syracuse

In September 2018, KBR switched to a new integrated library system (ILS)- Syracuse, which offers users considerably more functionalities, such as online requests for documents and reproductions, but also the (e-)depositing of publications. The changeover to a new system required the migration of more than 5 million existing bibliographic records, a database that had been built up by KBR catalogers since 1969.





Scientific activities

KBR is also a scientific institution, where researchers bring together, preserve, make accessible and study the collections. In 2018 and 2019, they managed 12 research projects, gave 105 lectures, gave specialized classes at four universities and published 146 publications on topics ranging in time and content from Roman coins to the archiving of the Belgian Web.



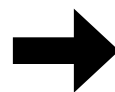
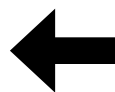
Public events

KBR is not a carefully closed vault full of unknown treasures, but likes to present its pieces to a large audience.

In 2019, KBR organized the exhibition “[The World of Bruegel in Black and White](#)”. Bruegel was not who people think he was, because much more than as a painter he was known for his printmaking in his own time. KBR maintains 130 of his prints and made them accessible to young and old in a very favorably received exhibition of 28,000 visitors enjoyed!

The financial support from and cooperation with the Buildings Agency, Toerisme Vlaanderen, the Baillet Latour Fund and the National Lottery enabled KBR to redesign and to fully make the Palace of Charles of Lorraine accessible so that more exhibitions with international potential can take place the future.

In 2019, KBR collaborated with the University Library of KU Leuven on the exhibition “Ovid in Metamorphosis”, about the most famous Roman poet Publius Ovidius Naso. In 2018, the exhibition “Léon Spilliaert. De verzameling van de Koninklijke Bibliotheek van België” was on display in the Royal Galleries of Ostend.





Heritage items from KBR circulated all over the world in 2019, just like in previous years: 435 unique objects were on display at 25 domestic and nine international exhibitions. In 2018, 361 pieces from KBR were on display at 38 different exhibitions.

Every year KBR organized six [musical events](#) where talented musicians performed scores that are part of the own collection in the Degreeef Auditorium during afternoon concerts.

Renovated infrastructure

In 2018, two brand-new reading rooms officially opened their doors: newspaper and coin enthusiasts can now visit the two modernized spaces.

The inauguration of the new reception zone for all visitors and of a contemporary shop followed in 2019. KBR also welcomed the new caterer WITLOV, in the run-up to a renewed restaurant in 2020.

In addition, KBR developed its own beer: “Pier den drol”, a nod to Bruegel’s nickname.



A brand new museum

The icing on the cake remains: a new museum! In 2019, three floors around the Nassau Chapel and the Palace of Charles of Lorraine were completely redesigned for the purpose of the opening of the [KBR museum](#) in September 2020. For this project, too, KBR could count on the support of the Belgian Buildings Agency, Toerisme Vlaanderen and the Baillet Latour Fund. The non-profit association Friends of KBR also contributed. By means of 100 original manuscripts from the Library of the Dukes of Burgundy, the visitors of the new museum will be immersed in the 15th century and will learn how and where our artists produced manuscripts in the Middle Ages.



More than just a library

KBR is not only a library, but also an imaginative building by architect Houyoux. Visitors are always welcome for a guided tour. The ubiquitous marble, aluminum and woodwork exude the prestige of the 1950s: in 2018 and 2019, 5,100 people discovered the remarkable building on the Mont des Arts by a guided tour.

In 2018-2019, 14 partner organizations were housed in KBR, ranging from the archive for French-language literature, the American Fulbright Commission to centers specializing in codicology, bibliography and history of science.

In addition, KBR is the perfect location for an event or meeting, in the heart of Brussels, right next to Central Station. In 2018, around 200 external events were organized in KBR. In 2019, 110 external events took place and 13,000 visitors were welcomed.





Press

KBR reports on all these activities on social media and in the newsletter that is sent to 10,000 subscribers. The press also paid ample attention to it: 147 printed and 228 online articles brought big and small news to the public attention in 2019. In 2018, 61 printed and 113 online articles about KBR appeared.



Well-being and safety

Finally, KBR does not only treasure time, but also your well-being and safety. KBR ensures equal opportunities for men and women and fights against any form of discrimination. All areas of the building are accessible to people with reduced mobility and privacy laws are rigorously enforced.

