



## The Royal Library of Belgium : a place of history

The [Royal Library of Belgium](#)'s collections have been growing since the XV<sup>th</sup> century. Throughout its history, from the Library of the Dukes of Bourgogne to the present day, the Royal Library (its official name since 1837) has continuously built its collections by means of valuable acquisitions. With a collection of more than 7 million documents the Royal Library of Belgium (KBR) constitutes the literary and scientific memory of Belgium. Besides collecting Belgian publications through legal deposit, the institution owns materials of great historical and cultural importance.

## Researchers at the KBR

Several special sections coexist within the library : music, manuscripts, prints, maps and plans, coins, etc. As a federal scientific institution research and the legal deposit of Belgian publications are key missions for the Royal Library. Our top researchers participate in many projects, the details and results of which are published in our scientific journal: [In Monte Artium](#). Research is mainly focused on our collections. [Cartesius](#), an online collection of digitised old maps, a study project of [bibliophilic works](#) and the restoration and valorisation of [herbariums](#) from the XVII<sup>th</sup> century, to name only a few.

## Necessity for Open Access in national libraries

Since the digital transition, many things have changed, both in the area of publishing and in the way in which research is made available to the public. It is now essential for librarians to get accustomed to new technologies. Since the [Declaration of Berlin](#) on Open Access and because of its strategic position in decision-making as well as its proximity with research institutions, the Royal Library of Belgium continues to commit durably to Open Access.

## Open Access: a federal resolution

The Brussels Declaration of 2012 offers federal support to projects providing free access to research financed by public funds (as is the case for our researchers) but also to the creation of digital repositories in Open Access. Diffusion via Open Access has become a real federal resolution with the signing of this statement :

*"By signing this declaration \*signatories\* declare Open Access to be the default infrastructure for dissemination of Belgian scientific research results and express their determination to be amongst the frontrunners in this evolution, both at European and worldwide level."*<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Brussel Declaration on Open Access*, Open Access Belgium, 2012, <https://openaccess.be/open-access-in-belgium/brussels-declaration-on-open-access/> [17/10/2016].



## The Open Access Repository for Federal Organisations

ORFEO, an institutional repository, is a collaboration between several scientific institutions. The Royal Library functions as host for this project. It provides access to articles, books, preprints and postprints, theses, etc. from researchers at the partner institutions. The first goal of this green Open Access project repository is the systematic archiving of publications in order to ensure their diffusion. By increasing the visibility of the researchers and of the (ranking of the) institution it also facilitates the citation of those publications.

### Challenges ORFEO is facing

Despite the expertise and legitimacy of the institution, this electronic repository raises many questions and concerns among librarians and researchers. Copyright, creative licenses, digitisation, embargo, prints...: such frequently asked questions are a great opportunity for us to regularly communicate with our staff members. Therefore, the occasion of the Open Access Week and seminar "[Open Science on the move](#)" held by the Flemish and French-speaking universities with the support of the Royal Library provide us with the opportunity to brief our researchers on Open Access. We also offer our colleagues some short interviews with researchers about the subject, available on the [website of the library](#) (in French and Dutch).

### Editorial initiatives

In addition to the ORFEO archiving system, the Royal Library actively supports several editorial initiatives for Open Access. Since 2015 for example, the library has chosen to be a partner in several Open Access humanities and social sciences projects. The library joined the [OpenEdition](#) Freemium program for the development of the Open Access scientific publishing. More recently the library collaborated on the [Knowledge Unlatched](#) project. This innovative project brings together libraries and publishers in order to increase the offer of Open Access titles for monographs, which is quite unique.

The Royal Library of Belgium is proud to support both federal (with ORFEO) and editorial initiatives. Today's challenge is to keep communicating, to improve the cooperation with researchers and the promotion of these types of open publications to our public and contributors in order to stimulate the dissemination of content worldwide.

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