

Breaking new ground

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**We are a place of
encounter and dialogue
and create space
for innovation
and inspiration.**

Damian Elsig, Director

Breaking new ground

Damian Elsig, Director

2022 was an eventful year for the Swiss National Library. The focus was on the call for tenders for the complete renovation of the main building at 15 Hallwylstrasse in Bern and the reorientation of this listed building to meet the requirements of a library of the future. Another priority was the establishment of the new Museumsquartier Bern as an important cultural and education complex – a development that the Swiss National Library is also involved in.



What does a library of the future look like? The Swiss National Library grappled with this question for two reasons in 2022. On the one hand, because the listed main building – a key example of ‘Neues Bauen’ from 1931 – at 15 Hallwylstrasse in Bern is due to undergo renovation, and on the other, to take this opportunity to create space for future offerings, whether digital, analogue or hybrid.

For the complete renovation and refurbishment, the Federal Office for Buildings and Logistics launched a competitive study commissioning process in February 2022 in order to identify a project proposal that meets the diverse requirements. The proposal has to cover both the refurbishment of the building and the use concept for the National Library of the future. In addition, action is needed in terms of the building’s structure, as highlighted by surveys on seismic



NATBIB

Visualisation of the project by Christ & Gantenbein /
Drees & Sommer Switzerland

and structural safety, which were conducted in 2018. Beyond the actual construction, the new building should be integrated into the newly-created Museumsquartier Bern as a cultural and education complex and synergies should be utilised.

Forward-looking space planning

In the spring of 2022, 32 general contractor teams applied in the prequalification phase. The broad-based assessment board, consisting of representatives from the federal government, canton and the City of Bern, the neighbourhood Association and external experts, then whittled these down to six. On the basis of specific project proposals, the six selected teams showed how they planned to tackle the renovation and expansion at the heart

of the existing building complex. Particular attention was paid to enhancing the high level of *Baukultur*. The bidders also had to address the future use concept of the National Library. The aim was to architecturally capture the vision of a forward-looking library that brings people together and provides space for inspiration and innovation. The planned complete renovation revolves around this reorientation of the Swiss National Library.

In December 2022, the assessment board came out in favour of the **NATBIB** project by Christ & Gantenbein / Drees & Sommer Switzerland. This team impressively managed to preserve the high quality of the existing building complex. At the same time, they will create the necessary spatial conditions for a contemporary and attractive library of the future. One

of the ways in which they will do so is by renovating the historic book tower to make it into an attractive space for public use.

The *NATBIB* project will be further developed by the project team in 2023. The construction work, including on the southern underground stacks, is scheduled to start in 2025. During the building work, the Swiss National Library will relocate to the ‘Titanic’ building at 74 Monbijoustrasse in Bern.

Growing together in the Museumsquartier Bern

In June 2021, the [Museumsquartier Bern](#) association was established with eleven members: Swiss Alpine Museum, Bernisches Historisches Museum, Gymnasium Kirchenfeld, Kunsthalle Bern, Museum of Communication, Natural History Museum Bern, Bern University of

Teacher Education, Swiss Shooting Museum Bern, Swiss National Library, Stadtarchiv Bern and the Yehudi Menuhin Forum. The institutions will gradually grow together in the initial phase until 2024, but will retain their individual identities. In 2022, the publicly-accessible museum garden was opened between the individual buildings and therefore offers a new urban space for Bern. In addition, a charter was drawn up containing a vision, mission and shared values, and was launched in December 2022. The Museumsquartier Bern aims to be a diverse experience space that will attract people from the local area and further afield.



Museumsquartier Bern

An experience space that will attract people from the local area and further afield