

## > HERITAGE AND DIGITISATION

# The Digital Library for Disabled Persons



Division  
of Books  
& Reading



<http://bnh.numilog.com>

Reading and access to culture are an important part of the social integration of disabled persons and the French State has recognised this as a priority area. The Law of 1 August 2006 on Copyright and Related Rights in the Information Society (transposition of a European directive<sup>1</sup> of May 2001) makes an exception for these people to facilitate their access to written works<sup>2</sup>.

Therefore the local public institutions and representatives of civil society have joined forces to ensure that information and cultural works are made available to disabled persons.

The aim of the Digital Library for Disabled Persons, a project launched in 2005 by the City of Boulogne-Billancourt (in the Greater Paris region), is to allow all those faced with a disability to borrow a choice of digitised literary works. It is based on the belief that digital publishing is the most suitable means of access to written works for disabled persons.

The strength of this project, which is unique in France, is based on technological innovation, a solid support system thanks to the involvement of multiple partners, and constant evaluation.

### AN INNOVATIVE PROJECT

The BnH works just like a public library, purchasing digital books in the marketplace to offer them to its readers. Any person with any form of disability, wherever they live, may register to join the digital library. The library members then read the works by downloading them via the Internet using basic IT equipment and free reading software.

### A MULTI-PARTNER PROJECT

A first digital library was created in 2003 by the library of the **City of Boulogne-Billancourt** in partnership with the digital content provider Mobipocket. ([www.mobipocket.com](http://www.mobipocket.com))

In response to demand from a number of **associations for disabled persons**, a second digital library, adapted for use by those with a disability, was then developed. Amongst others, the following partners participated actively in this project:

- > The digital content provider Numilog ([www.numilog.com](http://www.numilog.com)),
  - > The Locked-In Syndrome Association (**ALIS**, [www.alis-asso.fr](http://www.alis-asso.fr)),
  - > The French Association Against Muscular Dystrophy (**AFM**, [www.afm-france.org](http://www.afm-france.org)),
  - > The Association of Paralysed Persons in France (**APF**, [www.apf.asso.fr](http://www.apf.asso.fr)),
- The Paris Public Hospital System (AP-HP) also participated through its 'mission for the disabled'. ([www.aphp.fr](http://www.aphp.fr) (offre de soins / handicap))

The quality of the partners that supported this project allowed the BnH to be opened to the public in January 2006.

<sup>1</sup>Directive 2001/29/CE of the European Parliament and Council of 22 May 2001 on the harmonisation of certain aspects of copyright and related rights in the information society:

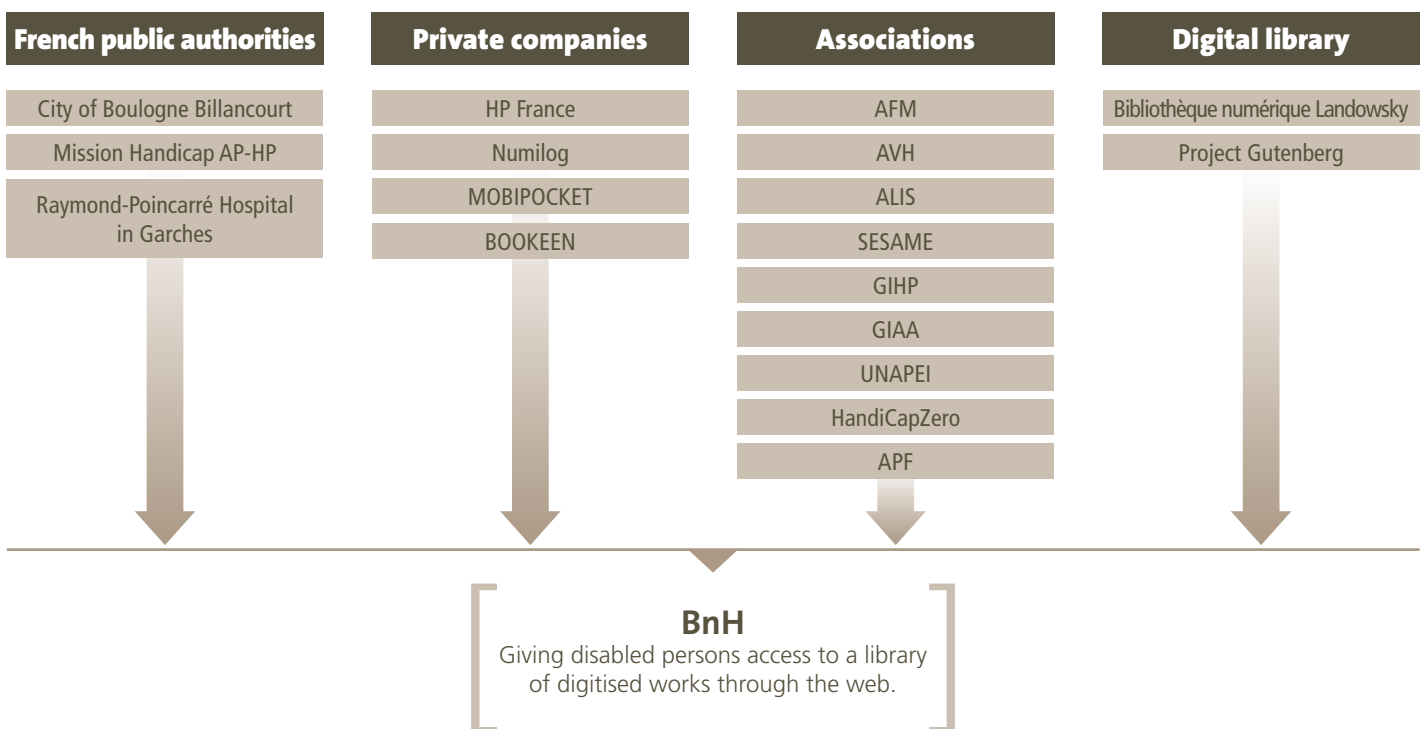
<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32001L0029:FR:HTML>

<sup>2</sup>Law no. 2006-961 of 1 August 2006 on Copyright and Related Rights in the Information Society:

<http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/texteconsolide/APEBD.htm>

In particular, see article L 122.5.7 °CPI.

## THE PARTNERS



## CONSTANT EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

From the outset all the partners agreed upon the importance of constantly evaluating the efficiency of the BnH.

So the project began by an experimental phase lasting one year. A Study of Digital Reading for Disabled Persons was launched, known as ELUPHA, aiming to evaluate the advantages of digital reading for people with disabilities and an online questionnaire was addressed to a national sample of users.

Early in 2007, after a year of use, the City of Boulogne-Billancourt asked a team of University students to conduct a scientific study in the form of an on-the-ground survey to find out more about the use of the BnH<sup>3</sup>.

This study revealed the following:

- > More independence in the activity of reading for disabled persons,
- > Better social integration thanks to access to recent works,
- > But, on the downside, insufficient copyrighted documents available and difficulties of use.

To remedy this, the evaluation provides technical recommendations that will make it easier to use the BnH.

## KEY FIGURES (JULY 2007)

- > 1100 titles in PDF and PRC format for e-books, and WMA format for audio books
- > 55 % of works are general literature and 45 % of works are documentaries
- > A 3-week consultation life span for downloads, (chronodegradable files)

- > 92 accessibility criteria are respected (earning it the gold level Accessiweb quality mark)
- > 2 impairments that are highly represented in the user base: visual and motor disabilities
- > 400 readers during the experimental phase
- > 2200 downloads since the beginning of 2006

## REFERENCES

> Speech by Alain Patez, head librarian for the BnH, at the 2007 conference of Association of French Librarians

<http://www.abf.asso.fr/IMG/pdf/S5.2%20Patez.pdf>

> Article by Marie Lebert on the BnH (October 2007). Available in French and English:

<http://www.etudes-francaises.net/dossiers/BnH.htm>

<sup>3</sup> Under the direction of Viviane Folcher, senior lecturer in ergonomics and psychology at the University of Paris 8.