

The ITU Library and Archives Service Guardians and disseminators of information

Are you reading ITU News to keep up-to-date with what is happening in telecommunications in general and the Union in particular? What if you would like to look at the magazine's forerunner, the Telecommunications Journal, dating back to 1934, or even to view the original Journal télégraphique, founded in 1869? You can do either of these things, and many more, by turning to the ITU Library and Archives Service.

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In Montbrillant and in the cloud

The ITU Library is on the sixth floor of the ITU Montbrillant building in Geneva, and welcomes users from within and outside the Union. There are open stacks, reading places, workstations connected to the Internet, as well as a corner where you can read newspapers and drink coffee.

On the Montbrillant shelves you can find the paper collections: books, journals, magazines, periodicals, dictionaries, directories and encyclopedias, as well as copies of ITU Recommendations and of course the Union's publications and official documents. Through the library you can also gain access to collections in the cloud of online information, such as e-journals, e-conference proceedings, e-books and other digital resources.

Even if you are not in Geneva, you can still visit the library through its website at www.itu.int/library, or access the catalogues of its holdings. The librarians will respond to requests for information from anywhere in the world.

Institutional knowledge

In the rapidly advancing world of telecommunications, information is being created every day. The activities of ITU, including conferences, workshops and studies, generate treaties, decisions, guidelines and standards. These publications are all available through the library. But along with the published documents, there is a flow of correspondence, internal memoranda and other records, sent or received by ITU, that help to explain what the Union does – why a particular course of action is pursued or put on hold or abandoned. The guardian of all this institutional knowledge is the Archives Service, whose mission is to ensure that the right records are available to the right people at the right time.

Because of the burgeoning activity in ITU, each day adds yet more records, whatever their form or medium. It is the responsibility of the Archives Service to manage this flood of information. There are two main challenges. The first is to organize the records so that they can be retrieved and used. The second is to determine how long records should be stored, which records need to be preserved indefinitely as historical archives, and which can be destroyed.

Since 2009, the Library and Archives Service has been involved in a Records and Information Management (RIM) project, with the objective of developing an efficient and transparent electronic system for the management of ITU official records. The goal is to provide for better and more timely decision-making by ITU. The benefits include a single and comprehensive electronic repository of documents, a reliable workflow for the treatment of documents, shared access to electronic documents, powerful search tools, and a file classification scheme for applying retention policies and security rules.

For the physical records, the Archives Service has a secure storage facility in the basement of the ITU Montbrillant building. In its long banks of shelves, this storage facility houses semi-active records and historic collections. The historic collections are available for consultation (on-site only) by anyone, including the general public. The Archives Service will, however, provide copies, on request.

History and memory

A pioneering organization such as ITU has much to record. The Library and Archives Service holds conference and meeting documents, and circular and collective letters, in an unbroken series dating back to 1865. There is historic correspondence from the period 1869 to 1947, and a collection of world and regional maps of telecommunication networks from around 1875 to 1930. The service also holds the proceedings of ITU seminars and colloquia, regulatory publications, recommendations, manuals and handbooks, photographs and posters.

To keep the memory of history alive, the Library and Archives Service has embarked on an ambitious programme to make unique ITU records widely available to ITU staff and all kinds of researchers. This activity, the Historical Documents Digitization Programme, has the dual objective of improving access to ITU information and ensuring the long-term preservation of historic documents. So far, more than 15,500 pages of conference documents have been scanned. These documents will be available on the new History of ITU portal (see box).

Customer services: research assistance and facilities

The Library and Archives Service responds to requests for information by telephone (+41 22 730 69 00), e-mail (library@itu.int), fax (+41 22 730 53 26) or in person in the Reading Room on the sixth floor of the Montbrillant building. Copies of documents can be made and – since 2008 – a specialized book scanner designed to prevent damage to bound and fragile documents can be used to digitize materials. The Reading Room provides photocopying facilities, WiFi and workstations with Internet access for research purposes.

The History of ITU – a new web portal

Founded in 1865, ITU is the world's oldest international organization. On its website a new portal is being launched on "The History of ITU", which offers links to the many documents, landmark dates and important figures that chart the Union's history and its contribution to connecting the world. The portal will be open in February and can be accessed at www.itu.int/history.

Résumé

Deutsch

Die International Telecommunication Union, kurz ITU, hat ihren Sitz in Genf und kann auf eine lange Institutionsgeschichte zurückblicken: 1865 fand die Gründung statt, und damit ist sie eine der weltweit ältesten internationalen Organisationen. Entsprechend zahlreich sind ihre Publikationen, welche vor Ort einsehbar sind oder für ITU-Mitarbeitende sowie Forscher zurzeit im Projekt «Historical Documents Digitization Programme» digitalisiert werden. Dadurch wird gleichzeitig die Langzeitarchivierung der Dokumente sichergestellt. Die ITU-Bibliothek befindet sich im ITU-Monbrillant-Gebäude und ist für alle Interessierten öffentlich zugänglich. Hier können die Besucher Dokumente und Bücher aus dem ITU-Bestand vor Ort konsultieren, online durch die «e-journals» und Konferenzen surfen oder Recherchen in Auftrag geben. Dies alles und noch mehr wird durch den Bibliotheks- und Archivdienst gewährleistet. Daneben ist dieser seit 2009 in ein «Records and Information Management»-Projekt involviert, um ein effizientes und transparentes elektronisches Managementsystem für die ITU Records aufzubauen. Alle Infos finden sich auch auf der Website www.itu.int, auf welcher ab Februar ebenfalls das neue Portal «The History of ITU» aufgeschaltet ist.

Français

(pd) La bibliothèque UIT met à disposition un environnement ouvert, des espaces de lecture et des places de travail connectées à internet ainsi qu'un coin pour lire les journaux et boire un café. En plus des supports traditionnels, elle propose des ressources électroniques. Le Service des archives gère les dossiers et les documents de l'UIT. Ceux-ci comprennent aussi bien les archives historiques - disponibles pour la recherche – que les archives courantes et intermédiaires – disponibles pour les services internes.

Une organisation pionnière comme l'UIT détient de nombreux documents d'archives qui remontent à 1865, comme une correspondance historique entre 1869 et 1947 et une collection de cartes régionales et mondiales du réseau de télécommunication de 1875 à 1930, en plus des séminaires, colloques, publications, guides, photographies, affiches etc. Ces documents sont en cours de numérisation afin de les rendre accessibles et d'assurer leur sauvegarde. Ils sont consultables depuis le nouveau portail «The History of ITU» www.itu.int/history

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Les services de la bibliothèques et des archives de l'UIT répondent aux questions par téléphone, fax, e-mail ou directement sur place. Des copies de documents peuvent être réalisées grâce à un scanner à livre.