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Rektorenkonferenz der Schweizer Universitäten
Conférence des Recteurs des Universités Suisses
Conferenza dei Rettori delle Università Svizzere
Rectors' Conference of the Swiss Universities

Program SUC 2013-2016 P-2
“Scientific information: Access, processing and
safeguarding”

Combining Efforts to Manage Scientific Information

National strategy

Approved by the SUC on April 3, 2014

Program Management:

roland.dietlicher@crus.ch, Program Manager

gabi.schneider@crus.ch, Deputy Program Manager

Website: www.crus.ch/isci

Foreword

With the P-2 funding program "Scientific information: Access, processing and safeguarding," the CRUS is adopting a new approach to dealing with scientific information. The aim is to make scientific information a domain in which Swiss universities meet requirements together instead of competing with one another. Targeted funding of collaborative projects is designed to help strengthen the Swiss scientific community's position in the face of international competition.

"Combining Efforts to Manage Scientific Information" fulfills one of the program's initial objectives and sets out a national strategy for this scheme. The "White Paper for a Swiss Information Provisioning and Processing Infrastructure 2020" provides more detailed technical information on the basic aspects of the program. It documents the framework conditions and procedure for delivering the national strategy and, in particular, defines the measures for implementing the strategy during the funding period up to 2016. The White Paper forms an essential basis for preparing and evaluating project applications.

The Swiss University Conference approved the national strategy on April 3, 2014. Over the next few years, the P-2 program must prove its worth as a sustainable tool in the Swiss funding landscape. We would like to take this opportunity to express our thanks to the numerous institutions and individuals involved in the process of developing this strategy. We look forward to working with you again in future.

The President of the Steering Committee:
Prof. Dr. Martin Täuber

April 2014

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1 Introduction

1.1 New challenges with regard to scientific information

The progress of digitization presents entirely new challenges for the distribution and processing of scientific data. Over the past 20 years, the Internet has fundamentally changed the way in which we handle scientific information. Researchers around the globe are now connected to each other; data and research findings are, in principle, available all over the world. However, digitization also creates new obstacles: costly licenses for online journals and license conditions restrict the availability of content. The long-term storage of digital information is complex and requires a joint effort. At the same time, improved mobility and the increasing internationality of science mean that mechanisms and tools are needed that are not tied to particular institutions, but can instead be used by the entire scholarly community.

Over the past few years, various European states have launched initiatives to confront these new challenges. The Swiss universities should also increasingly ensure the availability of scientific content, resources and tools at a national level in future. Accessibility and the division of labor should make these services more efficient and affordable, and strengthen Switzerland's position as a scientific location in the face of international competition.

The Swiss University Conference (SUC) has therefore launched the P-2 program "Scientific information: Access, processing and safeguarding." The Rectors' Conference of the Swiss Universities (CRUS) has been tasked with implementing this program.

1.2 Four key areas of focus

The P-2 program funds the development of national solutions in the area of digital scientific information. It aims to build up a service network for the Swiss scientific community that enables easy access to publications and data, and at the same time provides tools for processing and safeguarding them. Around 45 million Swiss francs are available to the program for the four-year period from 2013 to 2016.

The program groups the extensive topics into four key areas of focus:

- **Publications:** extending licenses and supporting digitization and open access to create a basic range of online scientific publications.
- **eScience:** consistent processes for accessing research data and standards for processing and archiving are to be established across institutional boundaries.
- **Basis:** a technical and organizational basis is necessary to implement the program. Facilities such as cloud infrastructures and a service platform are required.
- **Services:** existing local services such as repositories, publication platforms and e-learning tools are to be expanded to create national services.

1.3 Program setup

Effective networking and the involvement of as many stakeholders as possible were important factors in the development of a strategy for the program. A review of existing services and a requirements analysis carried out by IBM Consulting produced a portfolio of potential national services.¹ On the basis of this portfolio, sub-strategies were developed for individual fields of activity within the program. In the final stage, the Program Management brought the suggested funding measures together in the "White Paper for a Swiss Information Provisioning and Processing Platform 2020" to form an implementation strategy. The White Paper is definitive for the program's activities until 2016.

1.4 Funding framework

The program awards project-related grants from the Swiss Confederation to be used as start-up funding. An own-funding contribution of 50% is usually required. The local parties involved therefore play an important role in the implementation of the program's objectives; however, the program, which is primarily funded by the SUC, can commission specific prerequisites in a targeted manner. The ongoing commitments of the Consortium of Swiss Academic Libraries with regard to licenses for online journals, databases and e-books form the basis for this.

Calls for project proposals are issued every six months. An important selection criterion in the evaluation of the applications is the presentation of a sustainable business model.

The following institutions are invited to apply:

- The ten cantonal universities
- The Swiss federal institutes of technology and the four federal research institutes
- The seven public universities of applied sciences
- The institutions eligible for grants under the UFundA²
- The universities of teacher education
- The institutions as per Art. 15 of the RIPA³

Institutions that provide services to the universities in one of the program's areas of implementation (e.g. the library networks) and institutions in which universities play a leading role (e.g. SWITCH or the Consortium of Swiss Academic Libraries) are also eligible to apply. Only applications from non-commercial institutions will be considered. Businesses can be included in projects as project partners by eligible institutions.

1.5 Program management structure⁴

An initial portfolio of national services is to be created for the future service network by the end of 2016. A recognized organization with the ability to take action and an online service platform that meets users' needs will ensure its long-term operation, the management of services, access to these services from 2017 through service agreements, and a clear legal basis.

¹ IBM Consulting: Grundlagen zur Strategie (Foundations for the strategy), p. 37f: <http://www.crus.ch/isci>.

² Federal Act on University Funding and Cooperation in the Field of University Education, SR 414.20 (University Funding Act, UFundA), www.admin.ch/opc/de/classified-compilation/19995354 (03.17.2014).

³ Federal Act on the Promotion of Research and Innovation, SR 420.1 (RIPA), www.admin.ch/opc/de/classified-compilation/20091419 (03.17.2014).

⁴ A graphical representation of the program management structure can be found in the annex.

The CRUS has appointed a Steering Committee that is accountable to the SUC for implementing the program. It makes decisions on implementation proposals by the Program Management and on recommendations by the group of experts regarding the approval or rejection of project applications.

As of April 2014, the Steering Committee consists of the following members:

- Prof. Dr. Martin Täuber, Rector of the University of Bern, CRUS delegate for issues in the field of scientific infrastructure (President)
- Prof. Dr. Susanna Bliggenstorfer, Director of the Zentralbibliothek Zürich and President of the Conference of Swiss University Libraries
- Prof. Dr. Roman Boutellier, Vice President of ETH Zurich
- Prof. Dr. Claire Clivaz, University of Lausanne, Institut romand des sciences bibliques
- Dr. Alain Jacot-Descombes, University of Geneva, Director of IT Services
- Prof. Dr. Vincent Mooser, University of Lausanne, Centre hospitalier universitaire vaudois
- Prof. Dr. Christian Tschudin, University of Basel, President of the SIVIT (Strategiekommission Informationsversorgung und Informationstechnologie – strategy commission for information provision and information technology)
- Dr. Luciana Vaccaro, Rector of the University of Applied Sciences and Arts Western Switzerland (HES-SO)

The Program Management is accountable to the Steering Committee for implementing the program. It is responsible for the setup and proper management of all program activities. This also includes setting up the permanent organization.

As of April 2014, the Program Organization is made up of the following members:

- Roland Dietlicher (ETH Zurich, IT Services), Program Manager (50%)
- Gabi Schneider (Basel University Library, Open Access Service), Deputy Program Manager (50%)
- Martin Walder (CRUS), Project Manager (100%)

External resources are currently being drafted in as necessary for professional translation, administration, controlling and consulting. The Program Organization is also supported by the General Secretariat of the CRUS.

The Steering Committee appoints a group of experts to evaluate project applications. It evaluates the applications on the basis of its own specialist expertise and by seeking the opinion of external reviewers. The group of experts makes recommendations to the Steering Committee on whether project applications should be approved or rejected.

The operating model and legal form of the permanent organization are to be developed gradually until the end of 2016. The Program Organization is the starting point. The processes, responsibilities and synergies with existing organizations are to be continuously reviewed and developed on the basis of the approved projects. It seems sensible to affiliate the future organization with an existing body.

2 Strategy

2.1 Combining the efforts

The rapid developments in the sphere of information and communication technologies are transforming the world of research and teaching. The volume of data available is growing steadily. At the same time, collaboration between researchers and institutions and the associated exchange of data is gaining in importance. Until now, the Swiss universities have mainly responded to these challenges independently. Today, every university operates its own systems for information provision and IT. However, the need for change and increasing costs make a joint course of action advisable, for which the organizational prerequisites are currently lacking. Therefore, information provision in the Swiss scientific community must be reorganized gradually, so that the various parties involved can divide up work more effectively. The creation of a national domain should make it possible to include more parties, make services more widely available and work with better economies of scale in future.

2.2 Vision and mission

The program's objective is to combine and develop the universities' currently separate efforts to provide and process scientific information. The aim is to establish a reorganized system by the year 2020 that will provide researchers, teachers and students with an extensive basic range of science-related digital content and the ideal tools for processing it.

These services should be stable, flexible, competitive, and available on a national level. Through targeted funding, the program initiates and controls the development of this range of services and ensures their sustainable operation.

The implementation of the program is guided by the following principles:

- Services can be used **throughout Switzerland**. They are made available to all organizations through interfaces and common standards. All national services are listed in a central catalog.
- Shared services enable **cost optimization**. Existing services will be used wherever possible. If necessary, these services will be expanded to create a national service.
- Services can be provided centrally or using a decentralized system. A **central governance** defines interfaces and standards and ensures that legal constraints are observed.
- Services are guided by national and international **standards** and best practices. This makes them easy and intuitive to use.
- Services cover the entire **lifecycle** of scientific information – from creation to archiving.
- The **sustainability** of services is of vital importance.

2.3 Grants for 2013 to 2016

Around 45 million Swiss francs are available for the program in the 2013 to 2016 grant period.⁵ In 2013, in addition to the funding for the Program Organization, five initiatives were already awarded 8 million francs. With the projects "Swiss Academic Compute Cloud," "Learning Infrastructure" and "E-lib.ch," transitional funding has been secured for initiatives that are crucial for the program. These projects are now complete. The projects' organizers must submit new applications for SUC P-2. Fixed grants have been awarded until 2016 to the projects "E-codices" and "Kooperative Speicherbibliothek Schweiz" ("Swiss cooperative storage library"). Both projects will be incorporated into the program's strategy in future.

This leaves around 37 million francs for implementing the national strategy in the period from 2014 to 2016. This includes the funds for the Program Management and setting up the national organization.

2.4 Implementation

The implementation of the national strategy was developed in the "White Paper for a Swiss Information Provisioning and Processing Platform 2020." There are four key areas of focus: "Publications," "eScience," "Basis" and "Services." Various main implementation actions have been identified in each key area of focus. These apply until 2016 and are definitive for the budget. The amounts given are to be understood as benchmarks. The actual extent of the funding depends on the viable project proposals received.

2.5 Key area of focus 1: Publications

Scope

Digitization challenges processes for the provision of publications developed in an analog world. In principle, there are three fields of action: licenses for online journals, open access and the digitization of existing sources, known as retrodigitization. Work is already underway in all these fields of action. However, efforts are to be combined more effectively in future.

Main implementation actions until 2016

In the first field of action, the program is funding access to online publications by purchasing publishers' digital archives and national licenses. This supports the current efforts of the Consortium of Swiss Academic Libraries. The Consortium is to be further reinforced as a national service provider for universities.

In the second field of action, open access, the shared use of local servers is to be funded – these are known as repositories, and are where the universities make publications freely available (this is the "green road"). A wider exchange of data and information should make the separate efforts more effective and provide researchers with better support in future.

In addition, open access publishers publish their products online and make them freely accessible

⁵ The total of 45 million Swiss francs comprises the following amounts: SUC: 36 million francs; the ETH Board: 7 million francs; universities of applied sciences: 2 million francs.

according to the advance financing principle (known as the "gold road"). Due to the work that the universities have already completed, the green road is the priority for implementation. However, the program also has the capacity to fund exemplary gold open access initiatives. Figures on the publication behavior of researchers in Switzerland should form the basis for guiding coordinated actions by the universities. The funding measures are coordinated with the open access policy of the Swiss National Science Foundation.

In the third field of action, efforts to digitize content of national significance are to be developed further. Apart from digitizing additional key sources, the measures planned include improving links between the existing digitization platforms.

In order for them to be used, all online publications need to be accessible and easy to find. Modern search solutions must therefore be developed on the basis of high-quality metadata.

Overview of the implementation actions:

- Concept for national licenses and financing publishers' digital archives
- Improving the shared use of open access servers and digitization platforms by various organizations
- Incentives for open access publication models
- Digitizing content of national significance
- Improving the accessibility of publications and making them easier to find

Budget for 2014-2016

22 million Swiss francs⁶

2.6 Key area of focus 2: eScience

Scope

Dealing with the increasing volume of data and switching to a primarily digital method of data storage is one of the main challenges we face today. Up-to-date solutions must therefore be found for the whole of Switzerland on two levels. First, the conceptual foundations must be laid for the management and administration of research data throughout its entire life cycle. This "data lifecycle management" controls the way in which data is handled from its creation and use to its deletion or long-term archiving. Secondly, solutions are required for an up-to-date infrastructure. "Cloud solutions" are particularly promising in this respect. They make it possible to use online data storage from any location and provide flexible access to processing power, storage and applications.

Main implementation actions until 2016

The development of national services in the area of eScience is pioneering work. Projects first have to be established locally, working closely with an actual research project. National eScience services can only be developed afterward. Collaboration across institutional boundaries is essential to develop these services successfully.

⁶ Benchmark (see Section 2.4)

In order for this to succeed, the program is funding the development of projects in phases: first, concepts for national services are to be developed, and secondly, existing services provided by universities are to be developed further on the basis of these concepts to create pilot projects that will be able to be used across institutional boundaries in the future. The development of specialist knowledge is also to be funded as a supporting measure. The implementation of cloud solutions must also observe established security standards.

Overview of the implementation actions:

- Developing concepts as a prerequisite for national services, in particular for managing research data, providing metadata automatically and archiving (processes, interfaces, guidelines)
- Further developing established local services on the basis of the concepts
- Supporting pilot projects that use these services
- Supporting training; establishing a support body for issues relating to data management, cloud computing, and processing power issues

Budget for 2014-2016

3 million Swiss francs⁷

2.7 Key area of focus 3: Basis

Scope

The "Basis" key area of focus covers the organizational and technical measures that are required for the setup and long-term operation of electronic services at a national level.

Main implementation actions until 2016

With the aid of central user and rights management, collaboration, mobility and lifelong learning are to be supported in a way that meets users' needs more effectively. This type of national identity management makes it possible to identify people in systems and digital environments and regulates access and user rights for data and services. The SWITCH foundation is to be commissioned to expand the solution it currently operates in line with the new requirements.

In the area of computing and storage infrastructures (cloud services), the program is to cover the cost of incorporating the infrastructures into the national user management system. The purchase of cloud services is to be funded on the basis of actual use by users.

All of the program's areas of implementation mean dealig with issues of copyright, data and contract law in a digital environment. For example, a good knowledge of licensing law is required for open data and open access. By setting up competence centers, users and service providers should receive better support in future and the legal certainty of the program should be ensured.

Furthermore, the conversion of the Program Organization into a permanent operational structure is to be

⁷ Benchmark (see Section 2.4)

clarified. A service platform that meets users' needs must be set up gradually to serve as an entry portal for the national services.

Overview of the implementation actions:

- Setting up a national account management system with interfaces to the universities' user management systems (identity management)
- Setting up competence centers for copyright and data law and for supporting open access and open data
- Setting up a national computing and storage infrastructure that is flexible to use
- Developing a business model for using and charging for cloud-based services
- Developing a national organization and an operating model for the national services from 2017 onwards, based on the Program Organization
- Setting up an online service platform that meets users' needs for managing and accessing national services

Budget for 2014-2016

7 million Swiss francs⁸

2.8 Key area of focus 4: Services

Scope

This program does not fund purely local projects. Instead, it funds the shared use of services that meet a common need on the part of universities. This key area of focus provides incentives for the extension of existing local services to form services that are available throughout Switzerland. Collaborative approaches to solutions for new requirements are to be promoted by providing start-up funding.

Main implementation actions until 2016

In the strategy process, services were identified in the areas of e-learning and open access that are attractive to a range of institutions. Opening up these services to other participants should be funded, rather than the cost-intensive setup of a new service. By funding pilot projects that use cloud services, as planned in the "Basis" key area of focus, synergies will be created within the program.

In addition, support is to be given to service providers for the development of business models (visibility, marks of quality, business practices, charging systems, support for joining and use) for services that are ready for use. The joining costs (investment costs) for new users of these services are to be covered. Advisory boards will incorporate customer requirements and contribute toward user acceptance.

By providing funding for collaborative projects that aim to solve to current challenges, the program is creating opportunities to support quick responses to current developments.

⁸ Benchmark (see Section 2.4)

Overview of the implementation actions:

- Opening up e-learning solutions, document servers, open access publishing platforms, etc. to other participants
- Covering the costs of new partners to join these collaborative applications
- Funding collaborative pilot projects in new areas of requirement
- Pilot projects that use the national cloud infrastructure
- Offering shared services via a national service platform

Budget for 2014-2016

5 million Swiss francs⁹

⁹ Benchmark (see Section 2.4)

3 Projects

3.1 Project applications and briefs

The institutions that are eligible to apply are called upon to submit their projects, or if necessary will be directly commissioned to carry out implementation actions. Projects should build on existing services as far as possible and take into account national and international standards and best practices. Collaborative projects are particularly welcome. The first call for proposals was launched by the CRUS on January 20, 2014 and lasted until March 10, 2014. Further calls for proposals will be issued every six months until spring 2016.

Usually, the organization is expected to make an own-funding contribution of 50% of the project costs. Applications for reduced own-funding contributions may be approved if the project is of little benefit to the institution leading it.

3.2 Evaluation criteria

The requirements for the implementation of projects are ability, commitment, evidence of long-term financial viability and the availability of the service to the entire Swiss academic community. Project applications will be evaluated according to the following three criteria:

- A. Formal correctness
- B. Compliance with the White Paper
- C. Quality

Criteria A and B serve as filters and ensure that the applications are suitable for the strategy. The quality of the project applications (C) will be evaluated using the following criteria:

- C1. Benefits and strategic importance for the program:
 - Significance for the project portfolio
 - Impact
 - Quantifiable benefit
 - International importance
- C2. Feasibility:
 - Professional quality
 - Chances of success
 - Project team
 - Proximity to customers
 - Observance of legal frameworks
 - Consideration of technical conditions
- C3. Financing model:
 - Implementation costs
 - Operating costs
 - Sustainability
 - Potential users
 - Charging model

3.3 Evaluation procedure

The Steering Committee appoints a permanent group of experts to review the project applications. They are responsible for the specialist evaluation of project applications. The committee comprises seven to ten experts from Switzerland and abroad, who collectively meet the following requirements:

- Proven expertise
- (Political) independence
- Ability to speak several languages (German, French, English)
- A link to the Swiss federal system
- Appropriate diversity in terms of gender and age
- Availability (for travel)

External reviewers are also asked to evaluate the project applications.

The Steering Committee makes decisions about project applications based on the recommendations of the group of experts and ensures the support of higher education policy.

As the body responsible for the program, the SUC has the right to influence its course.

4 Outlook

By implementing this national strategy, the Swiss scientific community is taking the first step toward coordinating its skills and efforts to improve the availability and joint organization of information. Various European countries, such as Germany, France, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, have already been successfully pursuing similar initiatives for some time. The aim of the program is to give researchers in Switzerland more equal access to data that is relevant to their research and to the infrastructures required to access the data.

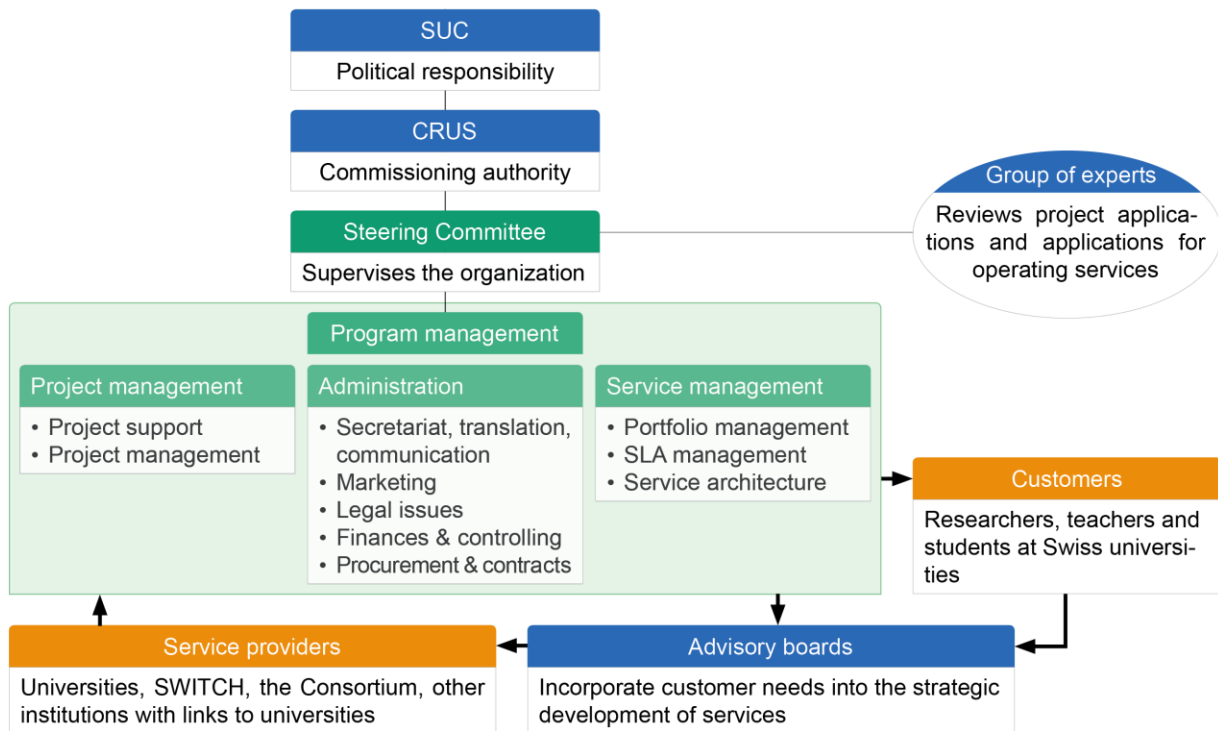
The program's four key areas of focus will ensure the start of an initial national coordination phase until 2016. However, it is crucial that the program has a lasting impact. The services that receive funding should continue to exist from 2017 onward. The strategy must be developed on an ongoing basis. The main implementation actions in the four areas of focus must be redefined and weighted and the budget must be adjusted accordingly. To ensure that this happens, it is very important to successfully set up a national body. This body should be a streamlined, credible coordinator that manages the service catalog and monitors adherence to the agreements. It should define guidelines and interfaces and coordinate the use of funds.

A political consolidation of the national strategy is also required. The Federal Act on the Funding and Coordination of the Higher Education Sector (HFKG) is expected to come into force in 2015. This new law stipulates that the Swiss Confederation shall coordinate and allocate tasks in particularly cost-intensive areas of the higher education sector at a national level (Art. 3, para. h). Furthermore, infrastructure projects that are of common interest should be able to receive financial support (Art. 47, para. 3). According to the current estimate, the new legislation should enable the SUC or, in future, the Schweizerische Hochschulkonferenz (SHK) to make the efforts permanent that have been launched as part of the P-2 program.

When the HFKG comes into force, swissuniversities, the joint rectors' conference of all the Swiss universities, will also commence operations. A permanent organization could potentially be affiliated with swissuniversities.

The actual implementation of the new legal framework and its consequences for the efforts of the SUC P-2 program are not yet known. However, it may be assumed that the aims of the present national strategy will be similar to those of the forthcoming federal legislation.

5 Program management structure (diagram)



6 Glossary

Cloud computing	Cloud computing is an approach that involves outsourcing certain IT services such as storage space, computing power or software. The services are accessed via interfaces, primarily through the Internet. Cloud solutions enable equal and flexible access to services from any location.
Data lifecycle management	Strategic processes for long-term data handling are known as data lifecycle management. This covers defined processes from the production of data to its secure archiving or permanent deletion.
E-learning	E-learning comprises all forms of digital learning support. Possible applications range from mobile learning platforms and personal learning environments to conducting online examinations.
Electronic publications	In this document, electronic publications are all publications that are available in their entirety in digital format, regardless of how they were created (subsequent digitization of a paper original or created in digital form) and their producer (conventional or open access publisher, archive or library).
Identity management	Identity management means managing users of a computer system (account management), allocating digital identities (accounts) to people and regulating individual access and user rights (authentication and authorization).
Consortium of Swiss Academic Libraries	The Consortium of Swiss Academic Libraries negotiates licenses (prices and terms) for online journals, databases and e-books on behalf of its partners – the cantonal universities, Swiss Federal Institutes of Technology, universities of applied sciences, several universities of teacher education, the Swiss National Library and other secondary partners from publicly funded institutions.
Metadata	Metadata is "data about data": descriptive, administrative, technical or structural data that is provided with data. In a digital environment, metadata enables or supports the interpretation and processing of data by machines.
Open access	Open access means scholarly publications that are freely accessible to the public online. A distinction is made between the different roads known as the "green" and "gold" roads. With the green road, the publisher gives the author the right to store the full text of a publication in a repository (often after a waiting period). Gold open access publishers reverse the business model: the publishing costs are covered in advance, the publications appear online and are available to the public from the time of publication.
Open data	Open data refers to data sets that are freely available and usable online. Constraints that apply to reusing the data are clearly visible (open data license). Open data creates transparency and promotes the visibility and reuse of data.
Repository	A repository is a server that is used to manage digital objects (e.g.

publications, images or research data). The common feature of institutional repositories is that the objects belong to an institution, while the objects in disciplinary repositories belong to a subject area.

SWITCH

The SWITCH foundation has been running the Swiss universities' high-performance network since 1987 and provides them with a range of other services.

White paper

A white paper provides a summary of services and standards in a certain area. The "White Paper for a Swiss Information Provisioning and Processing Infrastructure 2020" formulates the implementation strategy for the P-2 program.

7 Documents

- Demande de programme CUS: Information scientifique: accès, traitement et sauvegarde (Request for a SUC program: Scientific information: access, processing and safeguarding), as per May 24, 2012
- IBM Consulting: Grundlagen zur Strategie (Foundations for the strategy), as per July 31, 2013
- Program SUC P-2: "White Paper for a Swiss Information Provisioning and Processing Infrastructure 2020," as per April 3, 2014
- Program SUC P-2: Project application guidelines, as per January 20, 2014
- Program SUC P-2: Project application form, as per January 20, 2014

All the documents are available on the program website (www.crus.ch/iscl).